



Representative Youakim, Chair  
Education Finance Committee  
April 16, 2026

Chair Youakim and Education Finance Committee Members,

On behalf of the professional organizations representing Minnesota's student support personnel, we are writing in strong support of the proposed amendment to HF4893. This legislation provides a vital increase to the Student Support Personnel Aid formula, helping to restore essential resources following last session's funding cuts.

Our coalition includes the Minnesota School Social Work Association (MSSWA), the Minnesota School Psychologists Association (MSPA), the School Nurse Organization of Minnesota (SNOM), and the Minnesota School Counselor Association (MSCA). Together, we are the front-line responders to the physical, social, and emotional needs of Minnesota's students.

The historic investment made by the Legislature in 2023 was a transformative first step. It allowed districts across the state to begin hiring the specialized professionals—social workers, nurses, psychologists, and counselors—necessary to address the complex mental health and social-emotional challenges facing our youth. However, while that investment was a milestone, the data is clear: the need continues to outpace our current capacity.

Supporting this bill is important for three key reasons:

- **Continuing the Momentum:** Many districts have successfully utilized initial funds to stabilize their support teams, but caseloads remain significantly above recommended national standards. This increase will allow schools to move closer to the ratios required for true individualized care.
- **Proactive School Safety:** By investing in student support personnel, the Legislature is investing in the most effective violence prevention strategy available: building trusting relationships and providing early intervention before a crisis occurs.
- **Fiscal Responsibility through Specialization:** By providing dedicated, distinct funding for these roles, you ensure that school districts don't have to choose between physical building security and the human infrastructure of mental health. These are two separate needs that require two separate, robust funding streams.

We urge the Committee to support the amendment to HF4893 and continue the commitment to ensuring every Minnesota student has access to the professional support they need to succeed in the classroom and beyond.

Thank you for your leadership and your ongoing dedication to our students' well-being.

Sincerely,

Jessie Kember, President, Damion Smith, Past President, & Sarah Wollersheim Shervey,  
Legislative Chair

MN School Psychology Association

Abbey Pierce, MSW, LICSW, President & Christy McCoy, MSW, LICSW, Legislative Chair,

MN School Social Workers Association

Sydney Piras, Board Chair; Hayley Endersbe, Board Chair-Elect; Carolyn Berger & Debbie  
Nelson, Advocacy Co-Chairs

MN School Counselor Association

Tara Cliff, School Nurse Organization of Minnesota



**SHERIFF DAWANNA S. WITT**  
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April 15, 2026

Representative Cheryl Youakim  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor Centennial Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Representative Ron Kresha  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Centennial Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Co-Chairs Youakim and Kresha,

As Sheriff of Hennepin County, I write in strong support of HF 3401 and respectfully urge its inclusion in the omnibus Education Finance bill.

HF 3401 establishes uniform firearm storage requirements on school property. This is a clear, practical proposal that will benefit both schools and law enforcement. By creating consistent expectations statewide, the bill makes compliance easier for the public and enforcement more consistent and effective.

I was first introduced to this proposal in early August of last year, when Representative Greene visited my office with a group of high school students to discuss the idea. It was meaningful to be involved early in the process regarding legislation that law enforcement will ultimately be responsible for enforcing.

As a former school resource officer, I have seen firsthand how inconsistent firearm policies between school districts create confusion and challenges. HF 3401 would provide a clear, uniform standard and help bring greater alignment across districts.

As Sheriff, I have also seen the devastating impact that stolen firearms have on our public safety system. This problem is often exacerbated near places where firearm possession is prohibited, such as schools and hospitals. When individuals encounter these restrictions, they often return to their vehicles to store firearms. When stored improperly, those firearms become frequent targets for theft.

Stolen firearms are used disproportionately in violent crime and illegal activity. They also contribute to broader criminal networks, including drug and human trafficking, where they are traded transnationally to areas where they command higher value.

There is often criticism that new firearm laws are unnecessary because existing laws should simply be enforced. I agree that existing laws must be enforced. In 2025 alone, my office seized 697 illegally possessed firearms. But enforcement alone is not enough. Over half of gun homicides involve illegally possessed firearms, and more than half of stolen firearms are taken from vehicles. Safe storage requirements address one of the most common ways firearms end up in the wrong hands.

This bill also gives law enforcement a clear standard to educate the public and intervene before tragedy occurs.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support HF 3401 for inclusion in the omnibus bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Sheriff Dawanna Witt  
Hennepin County Sheriff's Office