



**American  
Foundation  
for Suicide  
Prevention**

Cassandra Linkenmeyer  
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American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
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**RE: Support HB 1083 – COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES LEAD**

Chairperson and Committee Members:

My name is Cassandra and I am the Area Director for the Minnesota Chapter of AFSP. I am writing today in support of HF1083, which will establish a lead as a source of information and support for schools in addressing students' mental health needs and developing comprehensive school mental health systems. I encourage you to move this important piece of legislation forward in order for it to be signed into law.

While we won't know the large scale effects of the pandemic on mental health, we do know that in 2020, we lost 48 young people ages 15-19 to suicide in Minnesota, making it the 2nd leading cause of death for that age group. According to the latest Youth Risk Behavior Survey (CDC, 2019), in the year before the survey, almost 1 in 3 (29.4%) high school students reported feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 or more weeks in a row; 16.2% seriously considered attempting suicide; 13.8% reported making a plan about how they would attempt suicide; and 8.2% attempted suicide one or more times. This suggests that we can and must do more to increase awareness of mental health programs and resources that are available for students who may be struggling.

The stigma around mental health often creates an environment that discourages showing signs of vulnerability, which can contribute to a reluctance to seek help or self-disclose mental health concerns or suicidal thoughts. Mental health is central to student success and well-being and we owe it to our students to ensure they are supported in seeking help and have resources they can turn to when they are struggling. We also owe it to our schools to provide support and assistance for prevention education and loss support after a suicide death and HF1083 will do just that.

With your support, we can act to affirm the state's commitment to improving the lives of Minnesota's youth and prevent the tragic loss of life to suicide in the future. The AFSP Minnesota Chapter appreciates your consideration and we look forward to working with you and your staff on these issues moving forward. Please feel free to reach out with any questions or if you would like additional information.

Sincerely,

Cassandra Linkenmeyer  
AFSP Minnesota Area Director  
14 Feb 2022



February 16, 2022

Representative Ruth Richardson  
Chair, Education Policy Committee  
MN House of Representatives

RE: Support for HF 1083, Comprehensive Mental Health Support Lead

Dear Chair Richardson and members of the Committee,

Schools are not simply a place for students to grow academically. In addition to providing nutrition, opportunities to interact socially with their peers, and a myriad of other experiences, schools are the source of mental health services for many children. Recognizing the critical and growing need, in 2007 Minnesota pioneered school linked mental health grants, contracting with community providers to bring their services to students. Fast forward to today, and we know that school-based comprehensive mental health services and trauma-responsive practices may be more important than ever before.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, school closures and social isolation have affected all students, particularly the historically underserved. Students have faced a wide range of adverse experiences, and many have had to manage mental health and social-emotional challenges on their own. That is why EdAllies has advocated for trauma-informed school incentive grants to support much-needed training in non-exclusionary discipline and trauma-responsive practices as educators welcome students back into buildings and work to support their long-term social-emotional success.

HF1083 as amended would support best practices for schools to build out their mental health services by designating a lead professional at MDE responsible for developing and sharing resources to school districts across the state on evidenced-based strategies, behavioral interventions, and practices or techniques that address students' mental health needs, including a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention. The person serving in this lead role will assist schools in assessing their mental health systems and implementing trauma-informed and culturally responsive school-based programs. In addition, the lead may provide information and recommendations to the legislature on successful strategies and outcomes, as well as recommendations for integrating mental health services and supports in schools.

We commend Representative Moller for her thoughtful legislation aimed at providing schools with a comprehensive mental health resource at MDE. HF1083 will help ensure educators can readily access information on best practices and learn from other schools' experience, equipping them to innovate and better serve their students' needs.

Sincerely,  
Matt Shaver  
Policy Director  
EdAllies



*Mental Health Minnesota is the voice of lived mental health experience.*

*We carry that declaration forward as we work to advance mental health and well-being for all, increase access to mental health treatment and services, and provide education, resources and support across Minnesota.*

February 15, 2022

Dear Members of the House Education Policy Committee:

I write today to convey Mental Health Minnesota's support of HF1083 – Comprehensive school mental health service lead position established, and money appropriated.

The proposed legislation would add two lead positions within the Department of Education to support and focus on the mental health of students, teachers and staff.

Mental Health Minnesota provides free, anonymous online mental health screenings on its website. Since the pandemic began, screenings on the website have skyrocketed, with more than 50,000 online mental health screenings completed on Mental Health Minnesota's website between March 2020 and December 2021. Even more alarming: 37% of the online mental health screenings completed during the pandemic were from those under the age of 18.

The number of screenings completed by youth under age 18 has increased faster than adults, with 10,267 completed in 2021 compared to just 1,708 in 2019...a 500% increase. In addition, children and youth under age 18 have been more likely to score in the "severe" range for the symptoms they are experiencing for both anxiety and depression.

The vast majority of these children and youth (65%) say that they have never been diagnosed by a mental health provider or received treatment or support at any time in the past. Given the severity of the symptoms children and youth are reporting through these screenings, it is essential that we ensure access to treatment, services and support that can help them address mental health concerns and avoid crisis.

School-linked mental health services have been incredibly important as we work to help children and youth address their mental health concerns, and continuing education for teachers regarding mental illness and suicide intervention has also been a key step forward. But we can and should do so much more to provide resources and tools to schools. Creating these lead positions would be another essential step in addressing the mental health needs of students, teachers and staff in schools across Minnesota.

Thank you for the opportunity to convey support of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Shannah C. Mulvihill, MA, CFRE  
Executive Director



*Helping kids succeed in school and life for over 50 years!*

**MSSWA**

MINNESOTA SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS ASSOCIATION



February 14, 2022

Dear Chairperson Representative Richardson and Members of the Education Policy Committee:

The Minnesota School Social Workers Association (MSSWA) appreciates the ongoing advocacy to strengthen school mental health services. Mental health is an essential component of a child or adolescent's healthy development. When a student's mental health needs are unmet this can create significant barriers to academic achievement, social-emotional development, successful transition into adulthood and can even compromise school safety. Thus, MSSWA supports HF1083 as a valuable legislative initiative to enhance school-based mental health service delivery systems and resources.

Pre-Covid research showed that 1 in 4 children have been exposed to at least one traumatic event. Now we must recognize that the trauma of the pandemic as well as racialized trauma associated with the increased acts of violence on communities of color are affecting every one of us in varying degrees including our youngest learners. Licensed school social workers have witnessed firsthand how unresolved grief and loss, persistent anxiety, fears, and depression has overwhelmed the capacity of our students as well as educators to cope over the past 2 years. As many of you know, exposure to traumatic events like the pandemic especially during a child's early years can adversely ***affect a child's sense of security, attention span, memory and ability to process information, inconsistent school attendance, and can lead to poor outcomes later in adulthood.*** In order to effectively mitigate the detrimental effects of this public health crisis, it requires a comprehensive integrated approach to holistically address the mental needs of our students that prioritizes access to vital resources to support the well-being of ALL students.

HF 1083 recognizes the importance of establishing a comprehensive school mental health services lead position at the Minnesota Department of Education. Best practice to meet mental health needs of students uses a combination and a continuum of school based mental health providers like ***school social workers***, school linked mental health providers and in collaboration with culturally responsive community mental health supports and providers. On behalf of MSSWA, we urge you to support HF1083. Thank you again for creating systems and policies to support the social, emotional and physical wellbeing of all students. If you have any questions or would like further information, please feel free to contact Sherry Murphy MSW LICSW, MSSWA President or Christy McCoy MSW LICSW, MSSWA Legislative Chair.

Sincerely,

*Sherry Murphy*

Sherry Murphy MSW LICSW  
MSSWA President

*Christy McCoy*

Christy McCoy MSW LICSW  
MSSWA Legislative Chair





February 13, 2022

Dear Members of the House Education Policy Committee:

NAMI Minnesota strongly supports HF 1083 which would create two leads within the Minnesota Department of Education to focus on the mental health of students, teachers, and staff.

The pandemic has caused an increase in depression and anxiety among students, but also adults. The uncertainty, ambiguous loss, stress of distance learning and so much more have had a huge impact. Now, more than ever, we need to address the mental health needs of everyone in schools.

While teachers must have continuing education related to the early warning signs of mental illnesses in students and evidence-based suicide prevention training, this is only one aspect of a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention. Schools need to know what is effective – and harmful – in teaching suicide prevention to students as well as how to respond to suicides, including attempts, in their schools.

Minnesota has a nationally recognized program for providing mental health treatment in schools, the school-linked mental health program. But again, this is just one part of a comprehensive plan. Helping schools expand their services to students by learning about resources and best practices is important.

Teachers and staff have experienced a great deal of stress these past two years. Healthy adults support healthy children. We need to ensure that teachers and staff have access to health and wellness activities along with mental health treatment and supports.

This bill is very different than just adding staff to the safe and supportive schools division within MDE. It's very important that we call out mental health and not use a euphemism. Never has there been greater awareness and discussions around mental health. Let's take that next step and ensure that information and resources are easy to access at MDE.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sue Abderholden".

Sue Abderholden, MPH  
Executive Director



1919 University Ave. W., Suite 400, St. Paul, MN 55104  
651-645-2948 | 1-888-NAMI-HELPS | [www.namimn.org](http://www.namimn.org)





February 10, 2002



To Whom It May Concern;

On behalf of the Suburban Ramsey Family Collaborative (SRFC) partners and SRFC Joint Powers Board, we back the legislative H.F Bill No. 1083 to support improved mental health in schools for students and teachers/staff by funding a Comprehensive School Mental Health Services Leads. This bill would employ two leads to support schools in addressing the mental health needs of students, teachers, and school staff while developing a comprehensive school mental health system in school districts and charter schools. One lead would address the mental health needs of students and the other lead would address the mental health needs of teachers and other school staff so as not to perpetuate secondary trauma.

Some of the components of the bill that we believe would have important impact in schools include:

- Support for schools to build and/or improve a comprehensive, integrated and coordinated approach to both suicide prevention and mental health intervention and wellness promotion.
- The Information Clearinghouse to share model policies, written publications, best practices and other resources for mental health education as well as a compendium of supportive resources for school staff health and wellness.
- Alignment across the state departments and other state-sponsored agencies to increase resource and information flow to mental health supports and to decrease bureaucratic barriers of access.

Thank you for supporting this critical bill.

In partnership,



Mary Sue Hansen, Director  
Suburban Ramsey Family Collaborative  
Phone: 651-604-3514

***Providing an umbrella of resources and support to Suburban Ramsey children, youth and families. We are Stronger and Better Together!***

*If you'd like to know more about SRFC, check out our website @ [www.HowAreTheChildren.org](http://www.HowAreTheChildren.org)  
If you'd like to get on SRFC's List Serv, contact Mary Sue Hansen@ [MarySue.hansen@isd623.org](mailto:MarySue.hansen@isd623.org)*

**SRFC has been compiling a List of Basic Need Resources & Jobs/Training Opportunities for Youth. We are updating these GOOGLE DOCS on a daily basis as we meet with our partners and learn of any new resources.**

- The fastest way to access the directories is on the FRONT PAGE of the SRFC website: Go to:  
<https://www.howarethechildren.org/>
- For the SRFC BASIC NEEDS RESOURCE DIRECTORY Go to:  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1I22NCqIUnwa5PhDNX9Pjuv1BfahSemETtLYNI1\\_HSFQ/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1I22NCqIUnwa5PhDNX9Pjuv1BfahSemETtLYNI1_HSFQ/edit?usp=sharing)
- For the YOUTH JOBS AND TRAINING DIRECTORY Go o:  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Im170ktnvm-tX9V6hwiqzAYa15YNUME4GLL-Gc3zHro/edit?usp=sharing>. To access editing rights, contact [MarySue.Hansen@isd623.org](mailto:MarySue.Hansen@isd623.org) to either copy or customize this list for your own needs.