

SAFE SCHOOL FUNDING FOR ALL PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS



Traditional public schools receive \$36 per student (APU) to use on safety expenditures.



Charter school students are excluded from safe schools funding.



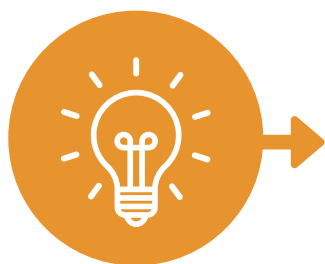
In 2019, the legislature passed a one-time safe schools supplemental aid for all school districts and charter schools. (FY20)



Eligible uses of Safe Schools funding:

- school security enhancements
- student and staff safety measures
- suicide prevention
- violence and crime prevention tools
- police liaison services
- drug abuse prevention programs
- gang resistance education training
- improving school climate
- costs of licensed counselor, nurse, social worker, psychologist, chem. dependency staff
- costs of cybersecurity measures

All Minnesota students deserve equally safe school environments no matter which public school they attend.



POLICY SOLUTION:

Provide equal safe school funding for chartered public-school students.



MN Association of
Charter Schools

www.mncharterschools.org

651.789.3090

shannon@mncharterschools.org - joey@mncharterschools.org



SMALL CLASSES
CREATIVE TEACHING
CONNECTED LEARNING

March 24, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair
Representative Youakim, Chair
House Education Finance Committee Members
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

I am the executive director at the Minnesota Online High School and strongly urge you to include HF2016 in your omnibus bill.

Minnesota Online High School, also known as MNOHS serves a very diverse population of students enrolled in grades 9-12. Most of these students have or are suffering from school anxiety or mental health issues as such as anxiety and PTSD among other social factors that do not allow them to attend a bricks and mortar high school full time.

MNOHS serves this diverse group of students by providing them with a rich, standards based virtual curriculum along with many relational supports. We employ school counselors and social workers to provide students with basic needs, academic supports, and coping mechanisms to succeed academically. Our school social worker specifically provides check-in appointments and counseling for students who may be thinking of self-harm in many ways. Our social worker has assisted students who are suicidal in gaining access to mental health facilities and assisted families in navigating these difficult times. This is not something we like to talk about as an educational community but something we must acknowledge in many ways. As an online high school, we also take cyber security and keeping our students safe online very seriously.

Safe Schools Revenue (safety aid), which currently excludes charter school students, is a fund available to address the unique safety needs of students and staff. The uses include: (1) School security enhancements, (2) Staff and student safety measures, (3) Suicide prevention, (4) Violence and crime prevention tools, (5) Police liaison services, (6) Drug abuse prevention programs, (7) Gang resistance education training, (8) Improving school climate, (9) cost of licensed counselor, social worker, nurse, psychologist, chemical dependency services, and (10) Cyber Security Measures.

As a school leader I do everything possible to create a safe, positive, and welcoming environment, which is a prerequisite for learning. This funding is essential for ensuring our



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ability to provide safe environments without having to access funds that should be used in the classroom.

In my school, these funds could increase the time our one social worker can spend with students in need at a critical time in their high school lives as well as keeping students safe online. All students must learn to be safe online as so much of their post-secondary experiences and vocational experiences will be virtual as well. This aid is critical to ensure that our students get the support they need. The time has never been more urgent to ensure that all Minnesota public school students are safe in their schools. Our charter school students deserve this safety aid as well as any other public-school entity.

We thank you for hearing HF2016 and urge you to expand Safety Aid Revenue to charter schools by including HF2016 in the House Education Finance Omnibus bill.

Sincerely,

Tracy L Quarnstrom
Executive Director
Minnesota Online High School



March 24, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair
Representative Youakim, Chair
House Education Finance Committee Members
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Juli Rubin and I am the School Board Chair at Oak Hill Montessori Community School.

I strongly urge you to include HF2016 in your omnibus bill.

Oak Hill Montessori Community School comprises of a Lower School (Toddlers - Pre-K) and Upper School (K-8th grade), serving 240 students in Shoreview and surrounding suburbs. We serve a diverse population with about 22% students of color, 10% free and reduced, and 17% of students receiving special education services.

Our public charter Upper School serves Kindergarten through 8th grade students, tuition free, making an authentic Montessori pedagogy accessible to all. We are proud to be a different point-of-view in education; driven by the motivation of students. We present challenging academics while valuing social skills as much as reading and mathematics.

Our facility and nearly seven-acre campus were specifically designed as a Montessori learning environment, meeting the developmental needs of students and inspiring them to learn both in the classroom and during free play. Utilizing Montessori principles, teachers often work in small groups, or one-on-one with children, providing an individualized approach to each student's growth. Mixed age classrooms allow older children to serve as leaders while younger students are able to observe their role models. Our responsive and caring faculty are empowered to create opportunities of discovery, observation, and reflection for their students, both on campus and in the broader world.

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As a school board leader I do everything possible to create a safe, positive, and welcoming



environment, which is a prerequisite for learning. This funding is essential for ensuring our ability to provide safe environments without having to access funds that should be used in the classroom.

In my school, these funds would be used to for security enhancements, including improved interior and exterior safety lighting and window security enhancements. These security features would not only serve as risk mitigations, but would also help foster a positive school climate where students and staff feel safe and secure.

We thank you for hearing HF2016 and urge you to expand Safety Aid Revenue to charter schools by including HF2016 in the House Education Finance Omnibus bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Juli Rubin".

Juli Rubin (she/her)

Board Chair

Facilities Committee Chair

Oak Hill Montessori Community School

4665 Hodgson Road | Shoreview, MN 55126

Cell: 612-669-4998

Web: www.ohmcs.org

March 24, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair
Representative Youakim, Chair
House Education Finance Committee Members
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Sabrina Williams and I am the Founder and Executive Director at Excell Academy Charter School in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota.

I strongly urge you to include HF2016 in your omnibus bill.

Excell Academy serves over 550 students Prek-8th grades of diverse ethnicities from over 10 cities in the northwest urban areas of Hennepin and Anoka Counties.

Founded in 2001, Excell Academy for Higher Learning is a Full-Service Community School serving college-aspiring Pk-8th grade students with the promise to prepare them for higher education and positive productive citizenship.

Excell Academy delivers a rigorous, values-based, “whole-child,” equity-in-education success path that:

- builds authentic relationships between our staff, students, and families
- is culturally and racially responsive, relevant, and inclusive
- offers social-emotional learning and supports with behavioral restorative practices to develop positive learning behavior and a strong and balanced mindset
- offers individualized interventions and/or enrichment while continuously monitoring progress and achievement
- creates empowered critical thinkers who are socially responsible.

Safe Schools Revenue (safety aid), which currently excludes charter school students, is a fund available to address the unique safety needs of students and staff. The uses include: (1) School security enhancements, (2) Staff and student safety measures, (3) Suicide prevention, (4) Violence and crime prevention tools, (5) Police liaison services, (6) Drug abuse prevention programs, (7) Gang resistance education training, (8) Improving school climate, (9) cost of licensed counselor, social worker, nurse, psychologist, chemical dependency services, and (10) Cyber Security Measures.

As a school leader I do everything possible to create a safe, positive, and welcoming environment, which is a prerequisite for learning. This funding is essential for ensuring our ability to provide safe environments without having to access funds that should be used in the classroom.

In our efforts to educate and support the “whole child,” these funds could be used at Excell Academy to hire an on-site full-time licensed school psychologist and related resources to address the plethora of post

pandemic mental and emotional health needs of our students and staff; which will in turn promote and enhance student learning and achievement.

We thank you for hearing HF2016 and urge you to expand Safety Aid Revenue to charter schools by including HF2016 in the House Education Finance Omnibus bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sabrina Williams', with a stylized, cursive script.

Sabrina Williams

Founder | CEO | Executive Director



March 24, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair
Representative Youakim, Chair
House Education Finance Committee Members
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Brett Wedlund, and I am the Executive Director at Nova Classical Academy and I strongly urge you to **include HF2016 in your omnibus bill.**

Nova Classical Academy is a public charter school in St. Paul serving more than 1,000 K–12 students. Nova **consistently ranks among the top five schools in Minnesota for reading and math proficiency**, and in 2023, we were the only school in the state recognized as an **Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing School**. We are also a **National Blue Ribbon Award** recipient. Despite consistently being one of the top-performing public schools in the state academically, we are also one of the lowest-funded public schools in the state. During the 2023–2024 school year, **our per-pupil funding was ranked 500th out of 511 traditional school districts and chartered public schools in the state.**

Safe Schools Revenue (safety aid)—which currently excludes charter school students—is a fund available to address the unique safety needs of students and staff. The uses include:

1. School security enhancements
2. Staff and student safety measures
3. Suicide prevention
4. Violence and crime prevention tools
5. Police liaison services
6. Drug abuse prevention programs
7. Gang resistance education training
8. Improving school climate
9. Costs of licensed counselors, social workers, nurses, psychologists, and chemical dependency services
10. Cybersecurity measures

At Nova Classical Academy, we want to do everything possible to create a safe, positive, and welcoming environment—which is a prerequisite for learning. However, our ability to do this has been restricted by an inequitable funding formula, as well as Safe Schools grants that prohibit funds from being used

Nova Classical Academy School District #4098

1455 Victoria Way, St. Paul, MN 55102

P: 651.209.6320 ■ **F:** 651.209.6325 ■ **E:** contact@novaclassical.org

novaclassical.org

on facilities schools do not own—essentially eliminating this option for charter schools to make their schools more secure. Because of this, the funding provided by **HF2016 is essential for ensuring our ability to provide safe environments without needing to divert funds that should be used in the classroom.** At Nova, top priorities for these Safe Schools funds would include:

- Redesigning our entryway to require visitors to access the school office upon arrival, rather than being given direct access to our lunchroom and main hallway. This is something many, if not most, traditional districts have already provided for using Safe Schools grants or levies.
- Reducing our school counselor-to-student ratio, which currently exceeds 500:1.

While I disagree with it, I do understand how our political system has led to inequitable funding structures for charter schools. **What I cannot comprehend, however, is how our state has determined that school safety aid is important for some—but not all—public school students. All public school students deserve funding dedicated to providing them with a safe and secure learning environment. This must be fixed.** For this reason, I thank you for hearing HF2016 and urge you to expand Safe Schools Revenue to charter schools by including HF2016 in the House Education Finance Omnibus Bill.

It's a Great Day to be a Knight!



Dr. Brett Wedlund
Executive Director

Nova Classical Academy School District #4098

1455 Victoria Way, St. Paul, MN 55102

P: 651.209.6320 ■ **F:** 651.209.6325 ■ **E:** contact@novaclassical.org

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Representative Kresha, Chair
Representative Youakim, Chair
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75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd
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Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Amanda Seelen, and I am a School Social Worker at Minnesota Online High School.

I strongly urge you to include HF2016 in your omnibus bill.

We serve high school students, including a disproportionate number of low-income families and students with 504 plans and IEPs.

As an online school, we reach students who have not been successful in traditional school models. As a non-profit, teacher-led community school, MNOHS has invested in very low student-teacher and student-counselor ratios to ensure students receive the attention they need. We make time for each student to connect one-on-one, ensuring their success and safety.

Safe Schools Revenue (safety aid), which currently excludes charter school students, is a fund available to address the unique safety needs of students and staff. The uses include: (1) School security enhancements, (2) Staff and student safety measures, (3) Suicide prevention, (4) Violence and crime prevention tools, (5) Police liaison services, (6) Drug abuse prevention programs, (7) Gang resistance education training, (8) Improving school climate, (9) cost of a licensed counselor, social worker, nurse, psychologist, chemical dependency services, and (10) Cyber Security Measures.

As a school leader, I strive to create a safe, positive, and welcoming environment, which is essential for learning. This funding is vital to ensuring our ability to provide safe environments without having to access funds that should be allocated for classroom use.

In my school, these funds could help us implement psychosocial groups, cover the costs of mental health and suicide risk screening tools, and enhance cybersecurity for students and staff.

We thank you for hearing HF2016 and urge you to expand Safety Aid Revenue to charter schools by including HF2016 in the House Education Finance Omnibus bill.

Sincerely,

Amanda Seelen
School Social Worker
Minnesota Online High School

March 24, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair
Representative Youakim, Chair
House Education Finance Committee Members
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Nicole Rasmussen and I am a Director at Cyber Village Academy..

I strongly urge you to include HF2016 in your omnibus bill.

We serve K - 12 students throughout the state of Minnesota in our hybrid and 100% online school. We have been serving students in the hybrid setting providing an alternate choice for students since 1998. Long before the pandemic, we saw a need for students and families to have ownership and involvement in their students' education. Our model has increasingly served a more diverse population, whether it is special needs students, students with school based trauma, health issues, culturally diverse families and students who are looking for flexibility and ownership in their education path.

Safe Schools Revenue (safety aid), which currently excludes charter school students, is a fund available to address the unique safety needs of students and staff. The uses include: (1) School security enhancements, (2) Staff and student safety measures, (3) Suicide prevention, (4) Violence and crime prevention tools, (5) Police liaison services, (6) Drug abuse prevention programs, (7) Gang resistance education training, (8) Improving school climate, (9) cost of licensed counselor, social worker, nurse, psychologist, chemical dependency services, and (10) Cyber Security Measures.

As a school leader I do everything possible to create a safe, positive, and welcoming environment, which is a prerequisite for learning. This funding is essential for ensuring our ability to provide safe environments without having to access funds that should be used in the classroom.

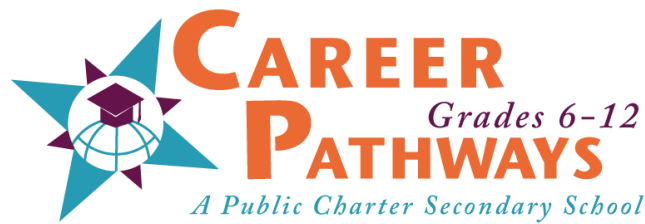
In my school, these funds could provide additional mental health support, increased education around violence, crime and drug abuse and school security enhancements, such as cameras inside the school. Most importantly, it is paramount that we provide a safe space for all students and staff to attend to their jobs by coming to a space where they can educate each other and learn how to be part of a community and advance their academic and life skills.

We thank you for hearing HF2016 and urge you to expand Safety Aid Revenue to charter schools by including HF2016 in the House Education Finance Omnibus bill.

Sincerely,



Nicole Rasmussen
Director
Cyber Village Academy



March 24, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair
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St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Dr. Joan Arbisi Little and I am the Director of Special Projects and former Executive Director at Career Pathways Public Charter School in St. Paul.

I am writing to urge you to include HF2016 in your omnibus bill.

At Career Pathways we serve students in grades 6 to 12 who seek a personalized program that focuses on college and career readiness. We utilize experiential and blended learning because we know students excel when they have hands on experience and a flexible learning environment. Our students choose our school because they did not find success in traditional school settings. They often enroll with records that show failing grades and poor attendance due to disruptions in their school and / or home lives. Over 80% of our students live in poverty and 30% speak another language at home.

Our students and staff come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Over the 10 years that we have been open we have helped students rebuild their academic records, discover their gifts and talents, and helped them develop skills and confidence so they can graduate and contribute to the community. Over the last two years four of our graduates have returned to work on our staff as paraprofessionals to support our special education students. When students enroll at Career Pathways they see people who look like them that open their eyes to new opportunities as they find their own unique path to success.

As a school administrator I do everything possible to create a safe, positive, and welcoming environment that fosters learning. We use Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to create an environment that increases effectiveness for all students. But we must meet foundational needs first by ensuring a safe and healthy environment that builds a connection to school. Currently we use funds that should be used for learning to ensure the staff are trained to act wisely in a crisis and keep the building secure.

Safe Schools Revenue currently excludes charter school students. The purpose of the fund is to address the unique safety needs of students and staff. The uses include: (1) School security enhancements, (2) Staff and student safety measures, (3) Suicide prevention, (4) Violence and crime prevention tools, (5) Police liaison services, (6) Drug abuse prevention programs, (7) Gang resistance education training, (8)

Improving school climate, (9) cost of licensed counselor, social worker, nurse, psychologist, chemical dependency services, and (10) Cyber Security Measures. Charter public schools need this support too.

Safe Schools Revenue, or Safety Aid, would ensure our ability to provide a safe environment without having to access funds that should be used for curriculum and materials.

In our school, these funds could buy additional security cameras, send new staff to crisis prevention training, hire a school nurse, and increase security for our technology filters that block phishing and other outside activities.

We thank you for hearing HF2016 and urge you to expand Safety Aid Revenue to charter schools by including HF2016 in the House Education Finance Omnibus bill.

Sincerely,

Dr. Joan Arbisi Little
Director of Special Projects
joan@cpathmn.org



LAKES INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE ACADEMY

An IB World School

March 24, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair
Representative Youakim, Chair
House Education Finance Committee Members
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Shannon Peterson. I am the Executive Director of Lakes International Language Academy (LILA).

Please include HF2016 in your omnibus bill.

At LILA we serve over 1400 PK - 12 students. While over 60% are from the area in and around Forest Lake, we attract about 500 additional students from beyond the immediate area. Our footprint includes 22 geographic school districts and our parents pay their taxes in 47 different house districts.

Our school welcomes all. We focus on language acquisition, with grades K - 5 being full immersion. We are also an authorized IB World School, offering International Baccalaureate programming to students in all grade levels.

Safe Schools Revenue (safety aid), which currently excludes charter school students, is a fund available to address the unique safety needs of students and staff. The uses include: (1) School security enhancements, (2) Staff and student safety measures, (3) Suicide prevention, (4) Violence and crime prevention tools, (5) Police liaison services, (6) Drug abuse prevention programs, (7) Gang resistance education training, (8) Improving school climate, (9) cost of a licensed counselor, social worker, nurse, psychologist, chemical dependency services, and (10) Cyber Security Measures.

As a school leader, I do everything possible to create a safe, positive, and welcoming environment, a prerequisite for learning. This funding is essential for ensuring our ability to provide safe environments without having to access funds that should be used in the classroom.

At LILA, additional Safety Aid funding—approximately \$50,000—could provide critical support for our students through hiring a part-time social worker or psychologist. The need for these services continues to grow, particularly as we welcome back an increasing number of students returning from

LOWER SCHOOL • Main Campus
246 11th Ave. S.E., Forest Lake, MN 55025
651-464-0771

UPPER SCHOOL • Headwaters Campus
19850 Fenway Ave. N., Forest Lake, MN 55025
651-464-8989

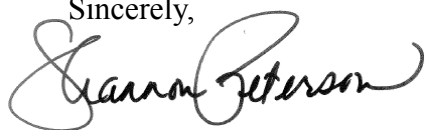
KINDER PREP • LILA Annex
121 11th Ave. S.E., Forest Lake, MN 55025
651-464-0771



mental health or chemical dependency treatment programs. Despite receiving only 70% of district schools' funding, our dedicated staff work tirelessly to ensure these students experience a smooth reintegration. Additionally, we recognize the importance of addressing attendance challenges; however, without adequate resources, it becomes increasingly difficult to expand these efforts without further straining our staff. For example, our high school counselor already commits significant unpaid time during the summer to complete student scheduling, a task that has proven impossible for her to manage while students are present in the building. Providing charter schools equitable access to Safety Aid would allow us to better meet our students' needs and foster a safer, more supportive learning environment.

I thank you for hearing HF2016 and urge you to expand Safety Aid Revenue to charter schools by including HF2016 in the House Education Finance Omnibus bill.

Sincerely,



Shannon Peterson
Executive Director
Lakes International Language Academy



NORTH STAR ACADEMY: Pre K-8

3301 Technology Drive

Duluth, MN 55811

Ph: (218) 728-9556

Fax: (218) 728-2075

RALEIGH ACADEMY: Pre K-6

5905 Raleigh Street

Duluth, MN 55807

Ph: (218) 628-0697

Fax: (218) 628-2264

March 24, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair
Representative Youakim, Chair
House Education Finance Committee Members
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Tammy Rackliffe and I am the Head of Schools at Duluth Edison Charter Schools.

I strongly urge you to include HF2016 in your omnibus bill.

Duluth Edison Charter Schools comprises two schools within the district, North Star Academy and Raleigh Academy. We are PreK- 8th grade schools serving 770 students in the Duluth area. We serve a diverse population with about 32% students of color, 54% free and reduced and 28% of students receiving special education services. Raleigh Academy is a small community school located in the heart of the West Duluth Community. North Star Academy is centrally located in Duluth on 270 acres of designated School Forest, serving students in grades K-8. We focus on outdoor education, a robust specialist program including art, music, community service learning, and second language options, in addition to a strong core of targeted instruction in reading, math, social studies, and science. We emphasize play-based and project-based learning, small class sizes, and a schoolwide focus on core values, community-building, and Restorative Practices.

Safe Schools Revenue (safety aid), which currently excludes charter school students, is a fund available to address the unique safety needs of students and staff. The uses include: (1) School security enhancements, (2) Staff and student safety measures, (3) Suicide prevention, (4) Violence and crime prevention tools, (5) Police liaison services, (6) Drug abuse prevention programs, (7) Gang resistance education training, (8) Improving school climate, (9) cost of licensed counselor, social worker, nurse, psychologist, chemical dependency services, and (10) Cyber Security Measures.

As a school leader I do everything possible to create a safe, positive, and welcoming environment, which is a prerequisite for learning. This funding is essential for ensuring our ability to provide safe environments without having to access funds that should be used in the classroom. Two years ago a student brought a gun to school. Thankfully the student and gun were apprehended quickly; however it caused fear and anxiety among students, families, and staff. We have worked hard over the past two years to provide support for our students through counselors, social workers, restorative practitioners, and enhancing our school climate and culture. While this has been effective it is not enough.

In my school, these funds would be used to provide additional support to our students through an additional school counselor and a restorative practitioner. These positions are crucial to provide immediate support for students who are feeling anxious, suicidal, or unstable. They are able to quickly intervene when a student is in crisis.

We thank you for hearing HF2016 and urge you to expand Safety Aid Revenue to charter schools by including HF2016 in the House Education Finance Omnibus bill.

Sincerely,

Tammy Rackliffe, Head of Schools
Duluth Edison Charter Schools

March 24, 2025

Representative Kresha, Chair
Representative Youakim, Chair
House Education Finance Committee Members
75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Kresha and Youakim, and Members:

My name is Elissa Raffa. I recently retired after 40 years as a public school educator, 20 as a high school science teacher and 20 as a charter school leader. I am writing today as a citizen and as an advocate for charter schools in Minnesota.

I strongly urge you to include HF2016 in your omnibus bill.

Safe Schools Revenue (safety aid), which currently excludes charter school students, is a fund available to address the unique safety needs of students and staff. Uses include: (1) School security enhancements, (2) Staff and student safety measures, (3) Suicide prevention, (4) Violence and crime prevention tools, (5) Police liaison services, (6) Drug abuse prevention programs, (7) Gang resistance education training, (8) Improving school climate, (9) Cost of licensed counselor, social worker, nurse, psychologist, chemical dependency services, and (10) Cyber Security Measures.

As a charter school leader, in an effort to create a safe, positive, and welcoming school environment, I often relied on competitive grants—an awkward situation, given that social worker services, school climate improvement, and cybersecurity are perennial necessities, not “extras.”

Safe schools funding is essential for ensuring that all schools, including public charter schools, provide reliably safe environments without having to divert funds that should be used in the classroom.

Thank you for hearing HF2016. I urge you to expand Safety Aid Revenue to charter schools by including HF2016 in the House Education Finance Omnibus bill.

Sincerely,

Elissa Raffa, M.Ed., M.F.A.
File Folder #295044 – Physical Sciences, Earth and Space Science, and District Superintendent