



February 24, 2026

Re: Support for HF3493, Safe schools revenue increased

Co-Chair Kresha, Co-Chair Youakim, and Members of the House Education Finance Committee,

We are writing in support of HF3493, which would expand eligibility for safe schools aid to include Tribal contract schools, charter schools, and nonpublic schools. The devastating shooting at Annunciation Catholic School last year, which took the lives of two beloved students, tragically highlighted that school violence impacts all children, regardless of the sector in which they attend school. All students, no matter where they live or what school they attend, deserve to feel safe in school, and all schools deserve the resources they need to keep their students safe.

Children are innocent, and they rely on us for everything, especially their safety. If we mean what we say about giving them everything they need to become thriving adults, then we must prove it in policy, practice, and culture. The provisions in HF3493 would allow us to make a small but meaningful investment as one of many that must be done in order for our policy and practice to live up to our collective responsibility for student safety.

Every school wants to keep kids safe, and we need to ensure they aren't forced to choose between staffing, everyday operations, and school safety upgrades—no matter the type of school.

The comprehensive change required to create the truly safe schools that our students deserve extends far beyond the confines of this bill, but it is an important piece of the puzzle. We urge the committee to support HF3493 and prioritize the funding needed to support it.

Matt Shaver
Senior Policy Director
mshaver@edalliesmn.org



February 23, 2026

Dear Members of the House Education Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide some input regarding HF 3492, HF 3493, HF 3494, and HF 3495 — bills addressing safe schools revenue.

We greatly appreciate the Committee's focus on school safety and security. Ensuring that students and staff learn and work in safe, supportive environments is a top priority for our members. While we support the focus on school safety, the proposals currently under consideration do not adequately address the scope of need facing school districts.

The safe schools levy has not been increased in more than a decade. Over that time, inflation has substantially eroded its purchasing power, while both the complexity and cost of maintaining safe learning environments have grown considerably. School districts are experiencing significant cost pressures in several areas including:

- Facility security upgrades, including secure entrances and access control systems;
- Security camera systems and monitoring technology, with ongoing maintenance and replacement costs;
- Cybersecurity infrastructure, as school districts face increasingly sophisticated threats to student data and operational systems; and
- Student mental health supports, including the need for additional counselors, social workers, psychologists, and other school support professionals to address escalating student needs.

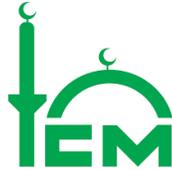
School districts need a sufficient, reliable and ongoing funding stream to invest across this full continuum to maintain secure and supportive learning environments. We appreciate the increased flexibility and support for cooperative entities offered in HF 3494, but incremental or limited adjustments to safe schools revenue will not provide our schools with the resources necessary to meet these demands. A meaningful increase in safe schools revenue is necessary to restore lost purchasing power and allow districts to plan responsibly for ongoing safety investments.

We respectfully urge the Committee to provide the resources our schools desperately need by significantly increasing safe schools funding for our school districts and intermediate and cooperative districts.

Thank you again for your focus on school safety and security. We stand ready to work with you to ensure that Minnesota's students and staff have the safe and supportive learning environments they deserve.

Sincerely,

Association of Metropolitan School Districts
MN Association of School Administrators
MN Association of School Business Officials
MN School Boards Association
MN Rural Education Association



February 20, 2026

Rep. Ron Kresha, Co-Chair
House Education Finance Committee
Centennial Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. Cheryl Youakim, Co-Chair
House Education Finance Committee
Centennial Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Co-Chairs Kresha and Youakim:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we are submitting this letter to the House Education Finance Committee to highlight the urgent need in Minnesota to make sure students in all our schools are secure and safe, particularly given recent horrific attacks in Minnesota and across the country. We believe that the state must play a leading role in ensuring all students – regardless whether they attend public, charter, or nonpublic schools – are safe and secure in our schools.

For background, there are approximately 72,000 students enrolled in Independent, Catholic, Jewish, Christian, Lutheran, and Islamic nonpublic schools in our state. In Minnesota, as you know, too many of our schools have experienced security issues. We believe that by creating a system where some students are safe while others are less secure creates targets for nefarious actors to cause significant harm to students and staff. Legislators should commit themselves to equity in student safety funding.

Back in 2023, nonpublic schools directly advocated with Gov. Walz to include nonpublic schools in a program proposed by his administration called the Building and Cyber Security Grant Program. Unfortunately, in the end, nonpublic schools were not included in this program. And since 2020, nonpublic schools have been advocating to be part of the Safe Schools Program that provides funding to school districts for emergency response training, security upgrades, mental health services and security resources. This legislation was re-introduced this year under HF3493 (Lawrence), among several bills appropriated funding for safe schools.

We urge the committee to consider moving legislation and funding forward that includes safe school funding for all schools and students in all sectors – public, nonpublic, charter, independent, cooperative, and tribal schools. Legislation aimed to protect and allocate funding to some schools but not all only makes the schools who are unfunded as vulnerable against future tragedies. This is unacceptable.

We cannot change the terrible tragedies that have fallen on our schools in the past 20 years, but we can change the future and prevent these tragedies from happening in the first place. We strongly urge you to take action and provide this critical funding for all schools this legislative session.

Respectfully,

Tim Benz
President
MINNDEPENDENT

Jason Adkins
Executive Director
Minnesota Catholic Conference

Ethan Roberts
Director of Government Affairs
Jewish Community
Relations Council

Zaheer Baber
President
Islamic Center of Minnesota

Dan Beckering
Head of School, SW Christian HS
Minnesota Representative, ACSI

James C. Davis, Jr.
Education Superintendent
Minnesota Conference of
Seventh-day Adventists

Sean Martens
Minnesota Districts Education Executive
LCMS Lutheran Schools



Representative Ron Kresha, Chair
Education Finance Committee
February 24, 2026

Chair Kresha and Education Finance Committee Members,

On behalf of professional organizations representing student support personnel and the Mental Health Legislative Network, we are writing to share our concerns about HF3494. This language changes the original scope and intent of school support personnel funding.

Our membership organizations include 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). Collectively, our members work as a team to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of students in Minnesota.

In 2023, the Legislature dedicated funding for schools to expand the positions of school social workers, nurses, psychologists, counselors, and chemical health counselors so that we can address the increasingly complex student needs that show up in schools across MN every day.

Because there is likely agreement about the importance of maintaining these licensed professionals in every building, we caution against changing the use of this funding as laid out in HF3494. The intent of the 2023 legislation was to increase staffing capacity to better address the mental health and social-emotional needs of students. In contrast, this language repeals the school support personnel aid in order to create additional resources for school safety.

While students' social-emotional well-being intersects with school culture and safety, the roles professionals play are fundamentally different. While both perspectives prioritize student well-being, research has shown that increasing mental health resources and supportive interventions can reduce disciplinary issues.

We recognize the desire to give financial flexibility to school districts in a time of stretched resources. Yet, it is for this reason we urge caution before merging school support personnel funding with school safety aid. Keeping the funding separate ensures that schools have the resources to invest in dedicated support services while still allowing districts to make informed decisions about safety measures based on their individual needs.

We appreciate your support of students in Minnesota, and we welcome the opportunity to collaborate with you as you develop the most effective ways to fund their needs.

Sincerely,

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

MN School Psychology Association

Julie Campanelli, LICSW, Ed.S, 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

Sue Abderholden & Shannah Mulvihill, Co-Chairs, Mental Health Legislative Network