



Saint Paul
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Independent School District 625
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Office of the Superintendent
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Superintendent of Schools

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Wednesday, March 1, 2023

To: Members of the Minnesota House Committee on K-12 Education Finance
From: Joe Gothard, Superintendent
Re: HF 1360

Chair Youakim and Members of the Committee,

As a public education veteran with nearly 30 years of experience as an educational assistant, teacher, coach, principal, and now Superintendent of Saint Paul Public Schools, I am writing to you in favor of **HF 1360: Safe Schools Revenue**. Simply put, students cannot succeed if they do not feel safe. As violence in the community increases, it impacts our young people both outside and inside of school. We need to do everything we can to collectively support students' safety when they are on our campuses.

School safety requires securing and sustaining a long list of resources, supports and research-based practices in order to be effective. This list includes, but is not limited to: highly trained security staff and related infrastructure and equipment; crime, drug, and violence prevention tools and education; licensed mental health staff including school counselors, social workers, nurses and psychologists; partnerships with mental health professionals from outside of the schools; effective and updated cyber security systems; and contracts for services from local law enforcement agencies.

Saint Paul is not unique in its need for robust and sustainable safety measures. Results from the 2022 Minnesota Student Survey revealed that students across the state feel less safe at home, at school and in their neighborhoods than they did in 2019 and 2016. Bullying and cyber bullying has increased in almost all grades. Meanwhile, students' engagement in their education has declined for all grades surveyed, as measured by their care and interest in what they're learning, paying attention and going to class prepared, and other key metrics.

This data, along with statewide and national declines in academic achievement as measured by MCA scores and The Nation's Report Card, serves as a call to action for everyone who has a stake in the success of our young people. In short, students need more support than they are currently getting to ensure their safety and academic success. HF 1360 is an essential step forward in meeting the needs of all Minnesota students.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joe Gothard".

Dr. Joe Gothard, Superintendent
Saint Paul Public Schools