

# Safe Haven In Every Local District (SHIELD) Act Presentation

## Committee on Education Policy

[Date]

Good afternoon, members of the Committee on Education Policy. My name is Jim Gillach, and I'm the Associate Principal at Chisago Lakes Middle School, Independent School District #2144. I've been an educator for 35 years, 30 of those at Chisago Lakes Middle School, serving as a teacher, Dean of Students, and for the past 10 years as the Associate Principal.

Chisago Lakes School District is located 38 minutes northeast of the Capitol, accessible via Interstate 35E and Highway 8. Our district serves 3,219 students across our E-12 system, with 728 attending our middle school. Our students and families reside primarily in the communities of Chisago City, Lindstrom, Center City, Shafer, and Taylors Falls making up what is known as the Chisago Lakes Area schools.

Our middle school, built in 1935 with subsequent additions, presents significant safety challenges due to its age and original design. While we have a comprehensive safety plan known as "I Love You Guys," or the Standard Response Protocol developed in collaboration with local law enforcement, the physical structure of our building compromises its effectiveness and poses unique challenges to maintaining student, staff and visitor safety.

Our main entryway, with its 27-foot width and 24-foot plate glass expanse, creates a vulnerable point of entry. The intended check-in process can be easily bypassed, granting access to areas like the two gymnasiums and cafeteria without proper screening.

Furthermore, the third floor, housing nine classrooms, presents an even greater concern. Eight of these classrooms lack doors entirely, with only a curtain separating the classroom doorway from the hallway. Also, the walls that make up these classrooms are inadequate folding walls or composite board bookshelves. These spaces are simply not secure in today's educational environment.

We've attempted to address these issues through three proposed bond referendums, all of which were unfortunately unsuccessful. We are committed to our students and staff safety and will be bringing another proposal to our community this May. Chisago Lakes is an equity poor district. Meaning we do not get the same funding as that of districts with larger sources of business tax revenue. These financial constraints facing our district make comprehensive improvements incredibly challenging. We are trying to address our safety and security needs, but our current funding is simply not enough to accomplish the needs we face.

This is why the SHIELD Act would be beneficial to the safety of students, staff and visitors. It offers a vital pathway for districts like Chisago Lakes to address these pressing safety and security needs. Specifically, the act's provisions for:

- Bullet-resistant doors and windows: These are essential for creating secure perimeters and deterring potential threats.
  - Ballistic wall panels: Particularly important in older buildings like ours, these panels offer crucial interior protection.
  - Magnetic locking systems: While becoming more common, these systems should be standard in all schools to ensure rapid lockdown capabilities.
  - Classroom duress alarms and mass notification systems: These are essential for immediate communication during emergencies, enabling swift response from staff and law enforcement.
- Our current system, like many schools, is outdated and inadequate.

The SHIELD Act represents a significant opportunity to create safer learning environments for all Minnesota students. It empowers districts to implement necessary security measures, ensuring that our schools are places where students and staff can learn, grow and work without fear.

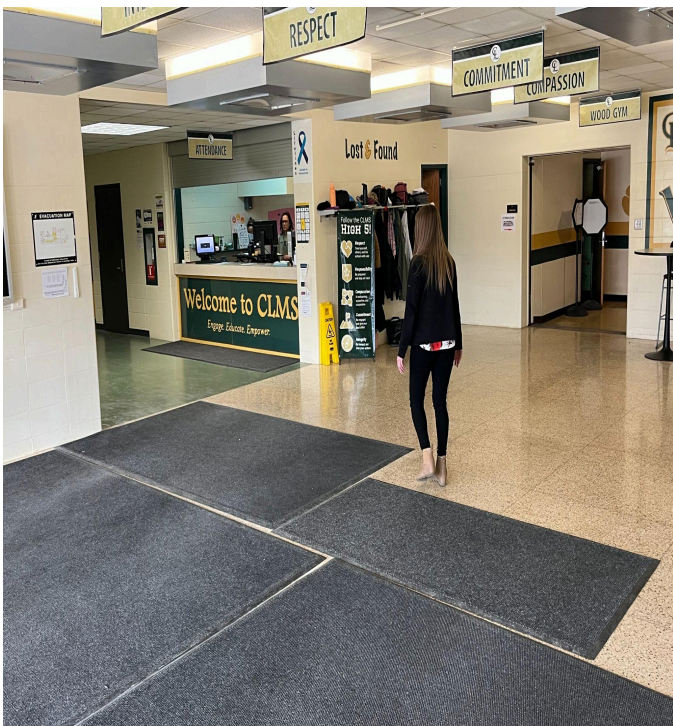
Thank you for your time and consideration of this vital legislation. We owe it to our students and educators to provide them with safe and secure schools.



27 foot front entryway - 25 feet is glass



Security buzz-in entryway



42 foot open walkway to check in desk



Check in desk - 42 feet from buzz in entry to CLMS





Front entryway



3rd floor - security doors at the end of hallway



Third floor hallway



Third floor - "door entry" to classroom