



MN Association of
Charter Schools

February 19, 2025

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

Dear Chair Kresha, Lead Youakim and Members:

The **Minnesota Association of Charter Schools (MACS)** is a membership organization of chartered public schools from across the state. MACS advocates for students in charter schools, supports charter school innovation, quality and accountability, and facilitates cooperation in Minnesota's charter school community to promote equitable opportunities and excellence in education for students.

Safety aid, a versatile funding stream, is a critical component for creating environments for student learning. However, chartered public schools are currently excluded from receiving safety aid. Charter school leaders ensure safe environments but are forced to take funding out of the classroom to accomplish this necessary outcome.

Conversations about safety aid funding must include plans to incorporate chartered public schools going forward. We've heard from leaders across the state about specific needs, ranging from cybersecurity upgrades, better intercom and camera systems, and mental health and addiction services. Every student, regardless of the type of public school they attend, deserves access to safe and secure learning environments. Charter school students should not have to wait any longer for equitable safety funding.

Sincerely,

Joey Cienian
Executive Director
Minnesota Association of Charter Schools (MACS)



Representative Ron Kresha, Chair
Education Finance Committee
February 20, 2025

Chair Kresha and Education Finance Committee Members,

On behalf of professional organizations representing school support personnel and the Mental Health Legislative Network, we are writing to share our concerns about House File 56. 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. The Mental Health Legislative Network (MHLN) is a broad coalition of 45 organizations that advocates for a statewide mental health system that is of high quality, accessible, and has stable funding. MHLN supports the role our school professionals play in addressing the mental health needs of students.

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 HF56. 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

Calli Moreau, Board Chair; Sydney Piras, Board Chair-Elect, Marguerite Ohrtman & Carolyn
Berger, Advocacy Co-Chairs,

MN School Counselor Association

Tara Cliff, School Nurse Organization of Minnesota

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