



Independent School District No. 94
Cloquet, Minnesota 55720

Central Administration
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Cloquet Senior High School
1000 18th Street • 218-879-3393 • FAX-879-6494
Cloquet Middle School
2001 Washington Avenue • 218-879-3328 • FAX-879-4175
Churchill Elementary School
515 Granite Street • 218-879-3308 • FAX-879-7034
Washington Elementary School
801 12th Street • 218-879-3369 • FAX-879-3360
Community Education
2001 Washington Avenue • 218-879-1261 • FAX-878-3013
Cloquet Area Alternative Education Programs
302 14th Street • 218-879-0115 • FAX-879-6941
<http://www.isd94.org>

February 27, 2023

Support HF 1360

Dear Members of the Minnesota State Legislature,

I am writing to you as the Director of Technology for the Cloquet Public School District to express my support for increased Safe Schools revenue and expanding the allowable uses to address cyber security concerns. I have deep concerns about the rising costs of cyber security for K-12 school districts. Our district has suffered from cyber-attacks, which resulted in significant financial losses and disruptions to our educational programs. I urge you to take action to help prevent future cyber attacks and mitigate their impact on our schools.

In 2016 and 2018, our district was hit with cyber attacks that cost us at least \$20,000 and \$30,000, respectively, to recover from. The true value of the data lost is impossible to calculate. In addition, our cyber insurance premiums have increased significantly, and we now have to spend an additional \$20,000 per year on an EDR solution to protect against future attacks. Responding to threats has become a daily task for my IT staff, and preventing the next attack has become a full-time job for me. This forces us to divert attention away from important IT functions required to keep students learning.

Unfortunately, our situation is not unique. According to the K-12 Cybersecurity Resource Center's 2020 report, cyber attacks on K-12 school districts have increased substantially in recent years. Since 2016, there have been at least 1,312 publicly disclosed cybersecurity incidents involving K-12 public schools in the United States, resulting in the theft of millions of students' data records and costing school districts over \$72 million in recovery and remediation efforts. Cybercriminals increasingly target school districts that often have limited resources and cybersecurity expertise. The cost of cybersecurity is becoming a significant financial burden for districts across the country.

Linking school and community to provide life-long learning and success for all.

Technology has become an essential part of modern education, and we need to ensure that our schools are equipped with the necessary cybersecurity tools and personnel to protect against cyber threats. It is critical that K-12 public school districts have the resources and support they need to protect themselves against these threats. This includes investing in robust cybersecurity measures, such as advanced threat detection and response solutions, hiring additional IT staff to combat cyber attacks, as well as educating staff and students on best practices for staying safe online. Additionally, it is important that school districts have comprehensive incident response plans in place, to minimize the damage of a potential cyber attack and ensure a swift recovery.

For every dollar we spend on cybersecurity, that is one less dollar we can spend on our core function of educating students. The financial burden of cybersecurity threats is significant for K-12 public school districts. The cost of cybersecurity insurance, recovery efforts, and prevention measures can add up quickly, taking away much-needed resources from other areas of the district's budget. In addition, the loss of sensitive information can lead to costly lawsuits and damage to the district's reputation. Putting resources toward offsetting these costs allows districts to reinvest funds diverted to cybersecurity back into the classroom.

I urge the Minnesota State Legislature to take this matter seriously and consider providing additional resources and support to K-12 public school districts to enhance their cybersecurity posture and protect against cyber threats. In closing, I want to emphasize the urgency of this issue. Cybersecurity threats are constantly evolving, and we must take action now to ensure the safety and security of our schools. We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your support in securing the future of K-12 education in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

T.J. Smith
Director of Technology, Cloquet Public School District

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael Cary".

Dr. Michael Cary
Superintendent, Cloquet Public Schools