



February 14, 2022

Dear Chairperson Representative Richardson and Members of the Education Policy Committee:

The Minnesota School Social Workers Association (MSSWA) appreciates the ongoing advocacy to strengthen school mental health services. Mental health is an essential component of a child or adolescent's healthy development. When a student's mental health needs are unmet this can create significant barriers to academic achievement, social-emotional development, successful transition into adulthood and can even compromise school safety. Thus, MSSWA supports HF1083 as a valuable legislative initiative to enhance school-based mental health service delivery systems and resources.

Pre-Covid research showed that 1 in 4 children have been exposed to at least one traumatic event. Now we must recognize that the trauma of the pandemic as well as racialized trauma associated with the increased acts of violence on communities of color are affecting every one of us in varying degrees including our youngest learners. Licensed school social workers have witnessed firsthand how unresolved grief and loss, persistent anxiety, fears, and depression has overwhelmed the capacity of our students as well as educators to cope over the past 2 years. As many of you know, exposure to traumatic events like the pandemic especially during a child's early years can adversely **affect a child's sense of security, attention span, memory and ability to process information, inconsistent school attendance, and can lead to poor outcomes later in adulthood.** In order to effectively mitigate the detrimental effects of this public health crisis, it requires a comprehensive integrated approach to holistically address the mental needs of our students that prioritizes access to vital resources to support the well-being of ALL students.

HF 1083 recognizes the importance of establishing a comprehensive school mental health services lead position at the Minnesota Department of Education. Best practice to meet mental health needs of students uses a combination and a continuum of school based mental health providers like **school social workers**, school linked mental health providers and in collaboration with culturally responsive community mental health supports and providers. On behalf of MSSWA, we urge you to support HF1083. Thank you again for creating systems and policies to support the social, emotional and physical wellbeing of all students. If you have any questions or would like further information, please feel free to contact Sherry Murphy MSW LICSW, MSSWA President or Christy McCoy MSW LICSW, MSSWA Legislative Chair.

Sincerely,

Sherry Murphy

Sherry Murphy MSW LICSW
MSSWA President

Christy McCoy

Christy McCoy MSW LICSW
MSSWA Legislative Chair

