



To Members of the Education Finance Division,

Minnesota's physical and mental health professional-to-student ratios are among the most dismal in the United States. Given our expanding opportunity gaps and our students reporting deeply distressing physical and social-emotional needs, Minnesota's education system is in desperate need of more school counselors, licensed school nurses, school psychologists and school social workers. School psychologists across the state of Minnesota hold serious concerns about the critical shortages in student support personnel and the impact of these shortages on students' access to quality education. Therefore, the Minnesota School Psychology Association (MSPA) is offering this written testimony to express our strong support for student support personnel aid in HF1742/SF1965.

The broad range of skills and expertise that licensed student support professionals bring to the communities we serve is essential to our duty to meet students' complex educational needs. For our education system to nurture well-rounded and healthy students, we need to provide them a supportive environment so they can effectively access instruction and grow in core subjects such math and reading. Given the impact of the pandemic on top of the existing needs of our students and families, our need for student support personnel is more critical than ever before. These staff members bring essential expertise to our schools as physical and mental health providers and play pivotal roles in linking our families and communities to the educational experiences of our students.

Due to ongoing shortages in positions, available personnel, and training programs, Minnesota is extending its student support personnel well beyond capacity, resulting in a reality where we are constantly responding to problems that could have otherwise been prevented. Minnesota's schools are forced to treat symptoms instead of healing the source which exacerbates harm and ultimately costs Minnesotans more money. Our state's failure to equip schools with the personnel necessary to address the systemic challenges of education is damaging our communities, and our most vulnerable families are taking on the biggest burden. Providing an appropriate education to every student in Minnesota requires expertise and resources on a scale that dignifies the size and scope of our educational needs.

The Minnesota School Psychologists Association urges our legislators to support HF1742/SF1965 to provide funding for additional positions and a stronger workforce pipeline of student support personnel.

Your consideration of this urgent issue facing Minnesota's schools is appreciated.

Respectfully,

Dr. Meghan Hickey, President, Minnesota School Psychologist Association
Damion Smith, President-Elect, Minnesota School Psychologist Association
Daniel Knewitz & Miranda Bernier, MSPA Legislative Chair & Co-Chair

cc: Brad Lundell, Dr. Sally Baas, Dr. Marilyn Leifgren, Amanda Hensgen, Dr. Jessie Kember, Anna Li