



**American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention**

Cassandra Linkenmeyer
Area Director, Minnesota Chapter
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
Phone: 507-721-8246 Email: clinkenmeyer@afsp.org

RE: Support HB 1083 – COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES LEAD

Chairperson and Committee Members:

My name is Cassandra and I am the Area Director for the Minnesota Chapter of AFSP. I am writing today in support of HB 1083 476, which will establish a lead as a source of information and support for schools in addressing students' mental health needs and developing comprehensive school mental health systems. I encourage you to move this important piece of legislation forward in order for it to be signed into law.

While we won't know the large scale effects of the pandemic on mental health, we do know that in 2020, we lost 48 young people ages 15-19 to suicide in Minnesota, making it the 2nd leading cause of death for that age group. According to the latest Youth Risk Behavior Survey (CDC, 2019), in the year before the survey, almost 1 in 3 (29.4%) high school students reported feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 or more weeks in a row; 16.2% seriously considered attempting suicide; 13.8% reported making a plan about how they would attempt suicide; and 8.2% attempted suicide one or more times. This suggests that we can and must do more to increase awareness of mental health programs and resources that are available for students who may be struggling.

The stigma around mental health often creates an environment that discourages showing signs of vulnerability, which can contribute to a reluctance to seek help or self-disclose mental health concerns or suicidal thoughts. Mental health is central to student success and well-being and we owe it to our students to ensure they are supported in seeking help and have resources they can turn to when they are struggling. We also owe it to our schools to provide support and assistance for prevention education and loss support after a suicide death and HB 1083 will do just that.

With your support, we can act to affirm the state's commitment to improving the lives of Minnesota's youth and prevent the tragic loss of life to suicide in the future. The AFSP Minnesota Chapter appreciates your consideration and we look forward to working with you and your staff on these issues moving forward. Please feel free to reach out with any questions or if you would like additional information.

Sincerely,

Cassandra Linkenmeyer
AFSP Minnesota Area Director

COALITION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

March 5, 2021

Education Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

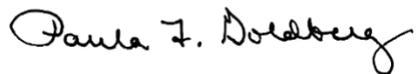
Chair Richardson and Members of the Education Policy Committee:

On behalf of the PACER Center and the Coalition for Children with Disabilities, I am writing to share the Coalition's strong support for House File 1083. We appreciate Representative Moller's proposal to create a comprehensive school mental health service lead.

Increasing access to mental health has always been a priority for the Coalition. The challenges faces by students during the COVID has only exacerbated the need for mental health services for all children. We hope that the creation of a mental health lead within the Department of Education will increase access to mental health services for Minnesota students. In addition to passing House File 1083, we hope that you will dedicate some of the state's \$1.6 billion surplus into new funding for mental health services for students.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for this important legislation. Please contact Sarah Clarke at sclarke@hyldenlaw.com or 952-201-4654 with any questions.

Sincerely,



Paula Goldberg
Executive Director, PACER Center
Member of the Coalition for Children with Disabilities

Coalition for Children with Disabilities

The Arc Minnesota • Autism Society of Minnesota
Epilepsy Foundation of Minnesota • Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid/Minnesota Disability Law Center
Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance • PACER Center
Prader-Willi Syndrome Association of Minnesota • Proof Alliance



March 5, 2021

Representative Ruth Richardson
Chair, Education Policy Committee
MN House of Representatives

RE: Support for HF 1083, Comprehensive Mental Health Support Lead

Dear Chair Richardson and members of the Committee,

Schools are not simply a place for students to grow academically. In addition to providing nutrition, opportunities to interact socially with their peers, and a myriad of other experiences, schools are the source of mental health services for many children. Recognizing the critical and growing need, in 2007 Minnesota pioneered school linked mental health grants, contracting with community providers to bring their services to students. Fast forward to today, and we know that school-based comprehensive mental health services and trauma-responsive practices may be more important than ever before.

Since the beginning of the pandemic nearly one year ago, school closures and social isolation have affected all students, particularly the historically underserved. Students have faced a wide range of adverse experiences, and many have had to manage mental health and social-emotional challenges. That is why EdAllies has advocated for trauma-informed school incentive grants to support much-needed training in non-exclusionary discipline and trauma-responsive practices as educators welcome students back into buildings and work to support their long-term social-emotional success.

HF1083 would support best practices for schools to build out their mental health services by designating a lead professional at MDE responsible for developing and sharing resources to school districts across the state on evidenced-based strategies, behavioral interventions, and practices or techniques that address students' mental health needs, including a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention. The person serving in this lead role will assist schools in assessing their mental health systems and implementing trauma-informed and culturally responsive school-based programs. In addition, the lead may provide information and recommendations to the legislature on successful strategies and outcomes, as well as recommendations for integrating mental health services and supports in schools.

We commend Representative Moller for her thoughtful legislation aimed at providing schools with a comprehensive mental health resource at MDE. HF1083 will help ensure educators can readily access information on best practices and learn from other schools' experience, equipping them to innovate and better serve their students needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jenifer Loon".

Jenifer Loon
Senior Policy Fellow
EdAllies



March 4, 2021

Dear Members of the Education Policy Committee:

NAMI Minnesota strongly supports HF1083 which would establish a lead position within the Minnesota Department of Education focused on mental health. The number one issue facing many schools is students' mental health.

We believe that there needs to be a lead person within MDE to assist schools in addressing students' mental health. This includes helping them know how to establish school-linked mental health services within a building if there is not a grant available, ideas for good training on mental health and mental illnesses for teachers and staff, and recommendations for education curricula for youth on mental health. It also should include assistance on what to do after a suicide so as to not promote contagion and helping all school districts develop robust policies on suicide prevention and response.

Schools need a person to contact within MDE when they have these questions, and we need a person within MDE to promote best practices. This is not a person within safe schools (sends the wrong message) or simply health. This is a specific area of expertise that is needed in our state.

Please support HF 1083 so that schools know where to go to obtain resources and support in addressing students' mental health. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sue Abderholden".

Sue Abderholden, MPH
Executive Director



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