



To Members of the Conference Committee,

We are writing today regarding our support for HF1065. School counselors, similar to Legislators, look at systemic solutions for identified problems. There are many systemic based solutions present in HF1065.

There are many parts of HF1065 that we support and one of the central pieces is the inclusion of the equity centered Multi-tiered systems of support definition. For too long, we have been working in ways that perpetuate achievement gaps and focus on removing students from the classroom environment because of equity issues. Multi-tiered systems of supports is frequently referenced in statutes, in supports for trauma-informed programs, in a discussion of how we can reduce and eliminate racial disparities in education, but the state has never had such a robust definition of multi-tiered systems of supports in statute.

This enhanced, Minnesota multi-tiered system of support (MnMTSS) definition will allow districts to identify what tools in their toolbox can help them meet the goals that we are all committed to – enhancing social-emotional wellness, eliminating achievement gaps, and keeping kids at school. MnMTSS is an evidence-based framework that is designed to effectively allocate resources within our schools. Extensive research has demonstrated support for MTSS as an innovation that can meaningfully reduce disparities in education.

Additionally, we want to support an increase in funding for student support workers and provision that support students and teachers of color. We see daily the impacts of representation in schools and the harm reduction that can happen when students see teachers and educators similar to themselves. Increasing the number of BIPOC educators will be central to ending achievement and opportunity gaps. Moreover, in a year such as this we see the increasing mental health needs of students and are concerned about the capacity of schools to attend to the post-pandemic needs. We are 3rd worst in the nation for student to counselor ratio and urge increased funding to ensure the students have the support they need to be successful in school and in their careers.

Finally, we support non-exclusionary discipline practices and see the impacts of school absenteeism and disconnection that happen when students are excluded from the classroom especially for issues of attendance and truancy. Students need to be in the classroom and continue to build connections with teachers and classmates.

We have the opportunity as a state to create meaningful, proactive systems that support all students on their path through and beyond high school.

Respectfully,  
Tanis Henderson, President  
Minnesota School Counselor Association