



An Initiative of Minnesota Alliance With Youth

March 21, 2023

Dear Representatives,

This is a letter of support for HF 362 which establishes comprehensive mental health services lead positions at the Minnesota Department of Education.

The Minnesota Youth Council is in support of this bill, and encourages the continuation of mental health support in the school system. We need to prioritize mental health for our kids today so they can be well-functioning students and citizens, and prepare them for bright futures. Mental health has always been a vital component for well-being in and out of schools, but with the COVID-19 pandemic, and the identification by the CDC of this experience causing adverse childhood experiences, it is as important as ever to take care of the mental health needs of students. Keeping this in mind, and knowing that early intervention can be a key to success, we need to take action now in supporting students, staff and teachers.

If there were lead positions at the state level, more kids, families, teachers and school staff would have opportunities to get better support and services. When young people have access to mental health supports and teachers are better equipped to support kids, young people are better able to focus on academics and contribute back into their communities.

Minnesota, unlike most states, does not have a permanently funded lead mental health position for students at a department of education. When this bill is funded, we would finally be creating mental health infrastructure that is long overdue. Although we are belated to support lead mental health positions for students, we would be leaders in our nation as one of the first states to have a lead mental health position for teachers at the MDE.

The bill has been heard numerous times and there are many people that need these supports in place more than ever, and our legislature has the opportunity to make a difference now by supporting this legislation.

As you may know, MN Safe Learning Survey (2021) found that state level support for mental health is needed. Specifically, there was widespread consensus across educators, families, and students that mental health is a significant concern and that teaching and learning environments need to be changed to better support mental health of students and teachers. Also, MN Principals Survey (2021) found that student and staff mental health concerns are the most significant ongoing

challenges schools are facing, and that the most helpful supports would be mental health resources for students and staff.

Again, I urge you to support HF 362 to establish these critical positions in supporting our kids, families and school staff in making a difference in the lives of kids through supporting their mental health needs.

Sincerely,

The Minnesota Youth Council

Minnesota Alliance With Youth • Minnesota Youth Council
1400 Van Buren St NE, #200-223, Minneapolis, MN 55413
www.mnyouth.net • youthvoice@mnyouth.net