



January 22, 2025

Minnesota House Education Policy Committee
2nd Floor, Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Members of the House Education Policy Committee:

The Legal Services Advocacy Project (LSAP) appreciates the opportunity to provide written testimony on HF6 and to share our serious concerns with the repeal of several protections for children.

LSAP and the Minnesota Disability Law Center (MDLC) are statewide projects of Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid. MDLC provides free legal services to children and adults with disabilities. LSAP is the advocacy arm of Legal Aid and has provided legislative and administrative advocacy on behalf of Minnesotans with low incomes since 1977.

Legal Aid is committed to ensuring all Minnesota children have access to a free public education and high-quality opportunities for growth. As such, Legal Aid has worked to dismantle those policies and practices that disproportionately deny educational access to the children we represent.

1. School Discipline

In 2023, the rights of children were strengthened with the passage of Chapter 55, which prohibited the use of three punitive practices for our youngest learners: (1) the suspension of children in kindergarten to grade 3, (2) solitary confinement (“seclusion”) for children birth to third grade, and (3) withholding recess from children as punishment.

These practices have been shown to be harmful and traumatic for our youngest learners. They serve no educational purpose. Evidence statewide illustrates these practices have been over-utilized, not for any beneficial educational purpose, but rather for the convenience of adults and administrators in short-staffed buildings. In our conversations with educators, they have never described these methods as best practices.

Rather than repeal these new laws and make them optional for school districts, Legal Aid believes the committee’s priorities should feature more funding for successful practices: more school counselors, de-escalation training, collaborative planning with families, professional development on problem-solving, and the creation of sensory profiles for individual children.

2. Access to Menstrual Products

Legal Aid represents many students who lack access to menstrual products at home. The policy in Chapter 55 to require free access in schools to these products represents a significant benefit to those students.

Our statewide surveys of parents accessing the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) have mentioned menstrual products as a top five affordability concern for parents and their youth. These vital products are often beyond the ability for families to afford after they pay for critical basic needs, including rent, utilities, and transportation. Further, these items are difficult to find at many food shelves that do stock other basic household supplies.

Legal Aid supports all efforts to ensure that youth have the support they need to take care of their menstrual health. A family's inability to afford menstrual products can cause extreme stress to the parents and youth in that household, and the public stigma around periods remains strong.

We respectfully request that these provisions in HF6 that make the above laws optional for school districts do not advance, as they will erode the progress made in the protection of children.

Sincerely,
Jessica L. Webster
Staff Attorney
Legal Services Advocacy Project