



Senator John Marty, Chair
Senator Mary Kunesh, Chair
Senate Finance Committee

April 28, 2025

Chairs Marty, Kunesh, and Finance Committee Members,

On behalf of professional organizations representing school support personnel, we are writing with concern regarding school support personnel language provisions included in SF2255..

Specifically, we are deeply concerned about the proposal to expand the allowable uses of Student Support Personnel (SSP) Aid to include funding for school staff "primarily engaged in consistent attendance."

Our membership organizations include the Minnesota School Social Work Association (MSSWA), the Minnesota School Psychologists Association (MSPA), the School Nurse Organization of Minnesota (SNOM), and the Minnesota School Counselor Association (MSCA). Collectively, our members work as a team to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of students in Minnesota.

Currently, SSP Aid is designated to support the hiring of licensed professionals—school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, and licensed school nurses—who are trained to address students' academic, social, emotional, and physical health needs. These professionals are uniquely qualified to work collaboratively with teachers, administrators, families, and community partners to implement a preventative, whole-child approach to student success.

The proposed expansion undermines this approach by shifting valuable resources toward staff who may not have specialized training or licensure to support students in a comprehensive, systemic manner. While we agree that student attendance is a vital issue, it is also a complex one—often rooted in mental health challenges, family instability, lack of school connection, or socio-economic barriers. These are issues best addressed by licensed student support professionals, not simply by increasing attendance monitoring or administrative oversight.

Minnesota created Student Support Personnel (SSP) Aid to address a critical shortage of licensed student support professionals across our schools. Redirecting SSP Aid to fund non-licensed attendance personnel would only exacerbate this already significant gap and undermine the intent of the program. Our students deserve access to trained professionals who can address the root causes of absenteeism—not just monitor it.

As licensed student support personnel, we know firsthand how essential our roles are in improving student attendance by addressing the root causes:

- We intervene in attendance concerns and collaborate with families, teachers, and community agencies to provide comprehensive support.
- We screen for special education needs and ensure students get the services they need
- We provide perhaps the only medical support some students receive.
- We help find housing for students at risk of homelessness and provide mental health support.

This work is preventative and rooted in strong, evidence-based practices. Hiring non-licensed staff to address attendance in isolation is a reactive step backward that risks reducing student access to high-impact mental health and academic supports—especially in rural and underserved communities.

Given the growing mental health needs of our youth and the state’s ongoing commitment to equity and academic achievement, now is the time to reinforce—not dilute—the intent and impact of SSP Aid.

For these reasons, we strongly urge you to reject the proposed expansion of SSP Aid. This funding must remain dedicated to licensed student support personnel who provide the preventative, systematic services that Minnesota students, families, and schools depend on.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to student well-being and success.

Sincerely,

Jessie Kember, President, Damion Smith, Past President, & Sarah Wollersheim Shervey,
Legislative Chair

MN School Psychology Association

Julie Campanelli, LICSW, Ed.S, President & Christy McCoy, MSW, LICSW, Legislative Chair,
MN School Social Workers Association

Calli Moreau, Board Chair; Sydney Piras, Board Chair-Elect, Marguerite Ohrtman & Carolyn
Berger, Advocacy Co-Chairs,

MN School Counselor Association

Tara Cliff, School Nurse Organization of Minnesota