

1420 East College Drive Marshall, MN 56258

January 23, 2025

To the Honorable Members of the Minnesota Senate,

My name is Greg Scheitel, and I am a licensed school social worker, mental health consultant at the SWWC, a concerned parent, educator, and mental health advocate residing in Windom. I am writing today to express my strong support for the SF 133, Student Support Personnel Aid Bill, particularly with the proposed revisions, as it represents a vital step toward addressing the growing mental health and well-being needs of students across Minnesota.

As someone deeply invested in the success and development of our youth, I have seen firsthand the challenges students face in today's world. Increasing academic pressures, social challenges, and mental health struggles have only been exacerbated in recent years. Despite these rising needs, many schools in our state lack adequate support staff, such as school counselors, social workers, and psychologists. This gap leaves many students without the critical help they need to thrive both academically and personally.

The revisions to this bill are especially crucial as they acknowledge the need for equitable funding and resource allocation, especially in rural school districts where we want to keep in place our community resources without hiring personnel away from our already stressed mental health services. Students in underfunded districts are often disproportionately affected, with limited or no access to support services. By providing targeted financial aid for hiring and retaining qualified support personnel, this legislation ensures that every Minnesota student, regardless of their zip code, can access the resources they need to succeed.

Investing in student support personnel is not just an investment in our children's future, it is an investment in our state's future. Studies consistently show that schools with adequate mental health and support services see improved academic outcomes, reduced absenteeism, and better overall student wellbeing. This bill aligns with Minnesota's commitment to fostering a strong, equitable, and thriving educational system.

I urge you to pass SF 133 with the proposed revisions to give every child the opportunity to reach their full potential. Thank you for your leadership and dedication to supporting the youth of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Greg Scheitel, LSW

Greg Scheitel

Mental Health Consultant SW/WC Service Cooperative