

March 17, 2025

Members of the Senate Education Finance Committee:

On behalf of NAMI Minnesota, we are writing in support of SF 42 to fund suicide prevention curriculum for Native American youth. The 2022 Minnesota Student Survey reported over 3,000 11th graders and over 4,000 9th graders have seriously considered suicide. While we know that students from all cultures are experiencing higher rates of anxiety and depression, Indigenous youth are particularly vulnerable.

According to the CDC, the overall death rate from suicide in 2020 for American Indian/Alaska Natives was about 50% higher than for non-Hispanic whites. In 2021, the death rate for suicide among adolescent American Indian/Alaska Native females, ages 15–19, was more than five times higher than for non-Hispanic white females in the same age group. These are alarming statistics, but the good news is that education works. Suicidal thoughts are a symptom, just like any other – they can be treated, and they can improve over time. Suicide is preventable.

Despite common narratives, talking and learning about suicide is one of the most beneficial things we can do to prevent it. Designing curriculum that can speak directly to the experiences of Indigenous youth is a crucial tool in preventing suicide, along with other tools like the 988 lifeline. Thank you for taking the time to hear this important bill. We urge your support of SF 42.

Sincerely,

Sue Abderholden, MPH
Executive Director

Elliot Butay
Senior Policy Coordinator