



MINNDEPENDENT is the state's largest advocacy organization supporting independent and nonpublic schools and students since 1976.

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA 2025

OPPOSE GOVERNOR WALZ'S ELIMINATION OF FUNDING FOR NONPUBLIC PUPIL AND TRANSPORTATION SERVICES.

Elimination of this critical funding will decrease services to students in need, increase costs for all schools, and exacerbate the school transportation crisis in Minnesota.

MINNDEPENDENT and nonpublic schools across the state **OPPOSE** Governor Walz's elimination of these important services for the following reasons:

- **Eliminates essential services** to students at a time when the need for student mental health services is increasing across the state.
- **Increases costs to nonpublic schools and their families** by denying students from accessing textbooks and instructional materials.
- **Increases the bus driver and transportation shortage** by threatening student safety, driving up costs for school districts and nonpublic schools, increasing traffic congestion and carbon footprint, and by the loss of efficiencies gained by working with school districts.
- **Denies equitable services to students and families** who rely on these services the most — low income families across the state and students and families in rural areas with limited resources.



SUPPORT GUIDANCE COUNSELING AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES LEGISLATION.

MINNDEPENDENT supports legislation extending counseling and mental health services to students in grades K-6 (HF984/SF903). As the recent report from the U.S. Surgeon General makes clear, mental health issues among young people are growing exponentially, and we know that counseling and mental health services are needed to students in all grades, not just grades 7-12.

"For decades, the legislature has ensured students receive vital counseling and transportation services, benefiting both public and nonpublic school students throughout their K-12 education. Cutting these services for nonpublic students serves no public good and undermines the concept all students are worthy of certain services. I urge you to preserve these essential supports for all students."

—Andrew Hilliker, President, Stella Maris Academy (Duluth)

"Transportation services guarantee safe, efficient travel for students across Minnesota, regardless of school type. Eliminating them for nonpublic students would compromise safety, increase costs for schools amid a bus driver shortage, and lead to redundant routes picking up students from the same areas. Families and schools, already stretched thin, cannot and should not shoulder these burdens."

—Russ Gregg, Founder and Head of School, Hope Academy (Minneapolis)

"We serve 196 students in grades K-8, 75% qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch, 85% are students of color and 47% are multilingual learners. Our students and families rely heavily on these services. Eliminating these services will disproportionately impact the students and families served by Community of Saints."

—Bridget Kramer, Principal, Community of Saints Regional Catholic School (West St. Paul)

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MINNDEPENDENT advocates with a focused and united voice so that local and state policy makers will understand and support policies and practices that strengthen Minnesota's nonpublic and independent schools.



BACKGROUND ON INDEPENDENT AND NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS

Total number of schools:	460
Total K-12 student enrollment; 2023-24 school year:	72,871
Percentage of total student enrollment:	8%
Increase in enrollment since 2019-20 school year:	10%
On-time graduation rate, 2022-23 school year:	99%



NONPUBLIC AID AND TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS

The Minnesota Legislature first enacted nonpublic pupil and transportation aid programs in the 1970s recognizing that the health and safety of every child is essential and important. The legislature expanded this concept by enacting the Free School Meals for Kids Program in 2023, allowing all students – including nonpublic students – access to free breakfast and lunch for schools participating in the National School Lunch Program.

The nonpublic pupil aid and transportation programs exist to provide state funded access to nonreligious study materials and student support services for nonpublic students. Funding is appropriated directly to school districts for the benefit of nonpublic school students. School districts are reimbursed for the costs of educational materials loaned for nonpublic students and for the costs of providing support services for nonpublic students under these basic categories:

- Textbooks, individualized instructional materials, and standardized tests;
- Health services;
- Guidance and counseling service; and
- Transportation services



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