

March 18, 2025

**Re: Support for SF 942**

Chair Latz and Members of the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee:

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Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for SF 942. The Minnesota Social Service Association (MSSA) strongly supports this bill, which statutorily authorizes child welfare and tribal agencies to collaborate with a community partner in response to reports of habitual truancy. MSSA is made up of over 5,000 health and human service (HHS) professionals statewide. Our members cover the health and human service spectrum—child welfare providers, mental health providers, social workers, case managers, etc.—and are employed by for-profit and nonprofit entities, as well as state and local government agencies.

Under current law, children with seven or more unexcused absences are reported for educational neglect, triggering a mandatory child protection response. This approach often fails to account for the systemic barriers that contribute to absenteeism, such as poverty, lack of transportation, housing instability, or insufficient childcare. As a result, families—particularly families of color and low-income families—are disproportionately impacted, facing unnecessary involvement with child protection instead of receiving meaningful support to address the root causes of school attendance challenges.

SF 942 appropriately shifts the response to school attendance concerns by allowing child welfare or tribal agencies to designate a community partner to lead the intervention rather than defaulting to a child protection case. The bill ensures that local welfare agencies and community-based partners can offer tailored, culturally responsive services to support students and their families in addressing school attendance barriers. Importantly, it maintains a mechanism to engage child protection only in cases where families do not engage with available services and truancy persists, preventing unnecessary system involvement while still upholding accountability.

MSSA strongly supports SF 942 and the corresponding funding to expand community-based child welfare response efforts. This solution ensures that children and families have access to the supportive services they need to succeed while reducing barriers to equitable outcomes in education. Thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to share our support for SF 942 on behalf of our members and the clients they serve. Please reach out to us with any questions, comments, or concerns at [msancartier@mnssa.org](mailto:msancartier@mnssa.org).

Sincerely,

Michelle SanCartier  
MSSA Director of Public Policy & Advocacy  
Minnesota Social Service Association

Beth Ringer  
MSSA Executive Director  
Minnesota Social Service Association