



April 22, 2025

Letter of Concern
Minnesota School Counselor Association
To: Senate Taxes Committee

Dear Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share the Minnesota School Counselor Association's (MSCA) concerns regarding the proposed changes to the Education budget.

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."

Currently, SSP Aid is designated to support the hiring of licensed professionals—school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, and 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. According to the American School Counselor Association, the recommended student-to-counselor ratio is 250:1. However, Minnesota's current average stands at 541:1—placing us 48th in the nation. 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 school counselors, we know firsthand how essential our roles—and those of our SSP colleagues—are in improving student attendance by addressing the root causes:



- We provide individual and group counseling to support students struggling with anxiety, depression, peer conflict, or trauma.
- We deliver classroom lessons that promote a sense of belonging and engagement—key factors in regular school attendance.
- We intervene in attendance concerns and collaborate with families, teachers, and community agencies to provide comprehensive 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, the Minnesota School Counselor Association strongly urges 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,

On behalf of the Minnesota School Counselor Association:

Calli Moreau, Board Chair

Sydney Piras, Board Chair Elect

Carolyn Berger & Marguerite Ohrtman, Advocacy Co-Chairs