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Members of the seclusion working group,

Education Minnesota represents over 84,000 active, retired and aspiring educators, including teachers, paraprofessionals, school counselors, and higher education faculty. We represent educators in every school district across the state.

Our members have various experiences with seclusion – some have received proper training and have seen it used appropriately to defuse situations, and others have seen it used too broadly. For this reason, we do not have a formal legislative position on the use of seclusion at this time. Instead we rely on our member experiences to formulate our responses and inform decision-making, including talking with members before and after each hearing of this working group.

However, Education Minnesota is strongly opposed to any changes to Student Support Personnel Aid. Student Support Personnel Aid goes to every school district, charter, intermediate and coop in the state and must be used to increase or maintain staffing for school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists and school nurses. This was one of the premier achievements of the 2023 legislative session, originally authored in House File 8, and represents a decade of advocacy by our members, parents and students across the state to demand schools staff the mental and physical health positions our students need. Minnesota consistently ranks towards the bottom in school staffing for these positions while the needs are ever growing. Even in this working group, the proposal outlined by Ms. Woodward would require increased staffing for mental and physical health teams as her proposal would require adding these staff to any IEP decisions on seclusion.

Education Minnesota and other organizations worked for a decade to create Student Support Personnel Aid. This funding goes to every district, charter school and intermediate in the state, and is the only formula that must be spent on qualified mental health professionals there in the school. The number one predictor of academic success is that the student has a relationship with someone in the building, that they believe one adult cares if they show up that day or not. That, combined with the mental health crisis that impacts one in three high school students, and the fact that Minnesota is consistently ranked 48th in the nation in mental health supports in schools, is why we care about this funding so much. We urge the working group to not touch this funding. Chair Seeberger has talked before about the harms of the legislature making choices without full vetting. We invite members of the working group to join conversations with their local school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists and school nurses and judge for yourselves if we are adequately meeting our students' needs in these areas.

The legislature, in order to solve a difficult budget process, has already cut Student Support Personnel Aid by \$50 million. Please do not further reduce our state's investment in student mental health.

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Education Minnesota is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers,  
the National Education Association and AFL-CIO. 6058

