



March 2025

To: Michigan Legislators

From: Teach Plus Michigan Teacher Policy Fellowship, Student Mental Health Working Group

We are a group of educators from across Michigan and members of the Teach Plus Michigan Teacher Policy Fellowship, a highly selective leadership opportunity for outstanding Michigan teachers looking to deepen their knowledge of education policy and gain a voice in decisions that affect their students and the teaching profession. Through this program, we strive to ensure that our state systems and policies benefit our diverse population of students. This is especially true when it comes to social emotional learning and student mental health.

Policy Goal:

By June 2025, the House and Senate Appropriations will restore \$300 million in the School Aid Budget for student mental health.

Why This Issue Is Important:

- + In a 2023 [Ed Week Survey](#), 52% of students reported that they needed mental health support (roughly 1,034 students surveyed).
- + Cases of depression in teens have increased by over 140% since 2010.
- + Michigan has the [2nd worst ratio for school counselors](#) per number of students, behind Arizona.
- + Data from multiple sources indicate mental health has a direct impact on academic achievement.

“Within one week, I had three students in crisis and I felt completely helpless. As empathetic as I can be, I am not a mental health professional and our students so desperately need professional help if they’re going to succeed academically.” -Kelsey Wiley, Detroit Public Schools Community District

What the Evidence Shows:

- + 2023 CDC data underscores the need for mental health professionals in school, working with students:
 - o **40.3%** of students felt **sad or hopeless**
 - o **19%** of students seriously **considered attempting suicide**
 - o **9%** of students **actually attempted suicide**
- + Michigan Student-to-School-Counselor Ratio: 667:1 Recommended Ratio: 250:1
- + Michigan Student-to-School Psychologist Ratio: 1,354:1 Recommended Ratio 500:1

- + Michigan Student-to-School Social Worker Ratio: 750:1 Recommended Ratio: 250:1
- + Michigan has experienced a 48.2% increase in chronically absent student population from 2020/2021 to 2023/2024 school year.

We Recommend:

- + **Restore** the full \$300 million allocation for mental health and school safety in the 2025-26 budget to ensure adequate mental health support for students.
- + **Increase** the number of school-based mental health professionals, including psychologists, counselors, and social workers, to meet recommended student-to-staff ratios.
- + **Ensure** funding is allocated equitably across districts to address the rising rates of chronic absenteeism and mental health crises among students. When students experience mental health issues, they are more likely to stay home which will negatively impact their academic performance.
- + **Mandate** data-driven policies to track student mental health needs and measure the effectiveness of school mental health programs.

What we stand to gain:

- **Students** will gain coping skills to help them focus on academic work instead of thinking about social struggles or worries.
- **Families and Schools** will see a decrease in chronic absenteeism and an increase in student academic achievement.
- **Michigan** will see a more productive and better-educated future workforce.

Considerations:

- Restoring funding for student mental health and school safety (Sec. 31a) to FY2023 levels would require roughly \$300 million to be appropriated in the upcoming School Aid Budget.
- House Bill 4081 of 2023 aimed to enhance mental health support for students enrolled in all public schools. The current student to counselor ratio in Michigan is 598:1. The House Bill 4081 aimed to lower the ratio to 250:1. The House Fiscal Agency estimated that the total cost to fulfill the bill's requirements would be \$400 million.

Respectfully submitted,

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