

February 11, 2026

To the Honorable Members of the Education Policy and Administration Committee

New Hampshire State House of Representatives

Concord, NH

Subject: Strong Opposition to HB 1754 – Repealing Statewide Use of MTSS-B

Dear Madame Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today and for considering the feedback you hear.

My name is Becky Kennedy, I am the System of Care Coordinator for Merrimack Valley School District. I am here in strong opposition to HB 1754, which repeals the statewide use of MTSS-B in New Hampshire schools.

MY FOCUS: SAFETY, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND SYSTEMS WORK

MTSS-B is not about a program.

It is not about ideology.

It is about **safety, accountability, and coordinated systems work** that New Hampshire has spent years building.

Since 2019—and well before—our state has worked intentionally to align schools, community mental health centers, law enforcement, fire and first responders, hospitals, early childhood providers, family agencies, and prevention coalitions.

MTSS-B is the framework that allows all of these entities to operate within a shared structure with common language. I have worked in education for 19 years. I started out as a school counselor in 2006/7 school year. There has been significant positive systems work in the past decade related to student safety, mental health awareness, and student and staff wellness efforts. With that said-

- MTSS-B is not a curriculum.
- It is not a diagnostic tool.
- It does not override parental rights.

At its core, MTSS is teamwork. It ensures steps are not missed and that major prevention or

crisis decisions are not left to one individual. It creates checks and balances.

Let me give you a real example. *(omitted because of time)*

Last week, our SAU held our monthly Interagency Team meeting. Around the table were

- *district leaders,*
- *special education administrators,*
- *building administrators,*
- *school counselors,*
- *Riverbend Community Mental Health,*
- *Waypoint family support,*
- *social workers,*
- *Juvenile Probation and Parole Officers,*
- *Community Bridges, and DCYF. At times, our School Resource Officer participates.*

At this meeting we learned our CMHC Riverbend has roughly a one-month wait and about 100 youth waiting for services currently. While families wait, schools stabilize students through tiered teams, check-in's, and bridge supports. Without that structure, students fall into gaps.

This meeting is operational and one example of one part of our tiered team system. We align procedures, review legal requirements/updates, coordinate around truancy court processes, discuss safety training like ALICE, share updated regional resources, etc. The team also serves as a referral pathway. When a family feels overwhelmed, is struggling, or a student is escalating, we don't send them agency to agency we coordinate in one space and determine next steps together with families at the table.

That is tiered systems work in action.

Because multiple districts operate daily within a tiered support structure, alignment extends beyond one SAU. If a student from our district (MVHS) attends WiCC (Winnisquam) or CRTS (Concord) CTE center, I know there is a parallel system in place where our 100+ students who attend, will have a system of support and access, should something arise during their day or part of their day.

Removing the statewide mandated use repeals this coordinated effort that currently exists. NH's MTSS-B model facilitates coordinated, accountable, and collaborative efforts across the state, which is crucial for preventing silos. Eliminating the statewide application of this approach would effectively dismantle this coordinated effort. The first on the list of things to be removed, are those that are not mandatory. If a decision is able to be made by one person in isolation, e.g. to not follow an MTSS model, that is dangerous. "No bid decisions should be made in isolation".

School districts operate a MTSS with a behavioral health lens in many areas: The ‘B’ in MTSS-B is for Behavioral Health and Wellness...not just mental health. These behavioral health areas include:

- Threat assessment teams
- Suicide prevention protocols
- Crisis response and postvention plans
- Bullying and harassment prevention systems
- Mobile crisis coordination
- Joint Loss Management Committee work -MTSS-B is Embedded into plans with approval (and required by) the NH Department of Labor.
- School EOP (Emergency Operations Plans/Procedures)

National Framework Example

MTSS-B is not a radical model. An example of a national approach to MTSS work: The **U.S. Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA)** uses a Multi-Tiered System of Supports framework to serve military-connected families worldwide: *(See attached handbook included)*

- DoDEA MTSS Overview:
<https://www.dodea.edu/education/student-services/multi-tiered-system-of-supports.cfm>
- [Attached](#)

Nearly every state operates within tiered support structures because they are evidence-based and measurable...These are structured, team-based processes. They are not optional and wouldn't work as 'optional'. Just like any safety plan, 'optional' is not predictable and cannot be measured.

Statewide Plan

The **NH 10-Year Mental Health Plan** *(attached)* calls for coordinated systems and early intervention. MTSS-B is how schools operationalize that plan.

Without a formal framework, safety becomes uneven.

MTSS-B ensures:

- Mandated district and building-level teams
- Data-driven decisions
- Clear roles and responsibilities

- FERPA and HIPAA-aligned collaboration
- Fidelity measures to ensure qualified professionals are involved

It is a guardrail. A framework that preserves local control while ensuring that:

- Suicide prevention is not optional
- Threat assessment is not optional
- Safety planning is not optional
- Prevention work is not optional

Removing the statewide mandate sends the message that coordinated safety systems are discretionary. **Discretionary is a synonym for optional....and safety should never be optional.**

Before taking this action, I urge you to consider the uncertain fiscal impact of this repeal. Dismantling MTSS-B would undo years of alignment, waste taxpayer investment, increase duplication, and push costs downstream into emergency services (ER's, police/first responders) and **out-of-district placements**. This will create added burden to response systems and tax payers.

I'm curious- if the sponsors of this bill consulted local districts?.. Community mental health centers? School safety teams? Or The cross-agency coalitions that have aligned resources and leveraged federal funding such as Title IV and opioid abatement funds?

This is not about one initiative.

It is about protecting students and protecting the coordinated systems New Hampshire has built.

MTSS-B is systems work. Removing it from being mandated to 'optional' would be a serious mistake that has major implications on systems and services for all students, staff and families.

Local Level

Attached are examples of local level data of how MTSS is working and the successes we have seen. It is beneficial to ALL students and staff.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Becky Kennedy,