

PRESS RELEASE

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Local School Districts Decline State 31aa Funds, Cite Legal Concerns and Commitment to Prevention-Focused Safety

Marquette, MI – 12.31.2025 - Several school districts within Marquette-Alger RESA's service area have announced their decision to decline state funding through Section 31aa of the Michigan School Aid budget for the current fiscal year.

The decision follows careful review of new requirements added to the FY 2025 budget, which mandate that districts accepting 31aa funds comply with state-directed investigation clauses and broadly waive certain legal privileges following a "mass casualty event" - a term that remains undefined in state law.

"This decision was not made lightly," said Dr. Greg Nyen, Superintendent of Marquette-Alger RESA. "Our member districts remain deeply committed to student safety and mental health. However, the new requirements raise serious concerns about legal exposure, ambiguous definitions, and a shift away from prevention-focused funding toward reactive, state-directed mandates."

Key Concerns Driving the Decision:

- **Undefined Terms:** The legislation provides no clear definition of "mass casualty event," creating uncertainty about what circumstances could trigger a state investigation.
- **Legal and Liability Risks:** Participation could compromise governmental immunity or expose districts and employees to unintended legal consequences. The language may also be construed as a waiver extending beyond a single fiscal year.



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- **Shift from Prevention:** The new language focuses on response after a tragedy rather than supporting the prevention efforts, mental health services, and early intervention programs the funding was originally designed to support.
- **Loss of Local Control:** Section 31aa was established to provide flexible, locally driven funding. The new provisions undermine local decision-making authority.

Continued Commitment to Safety

Districts declining 31aa funds emphasize that their commitment to student safety and mental health remains unwavering. These priorities will continue to be funded through local resources and alternative funding sources.

"Our focus is on ensuring our schools and students are safe and receive the mental health support they deserve - proactively," said Bryan DeAugustine, Superintendent of NICE Community Schools. "We will continue to advocate at the state level for clearer, prevention-focused policies that truly support students, staff, and communities."

For questions regarding individual district decisions, please contact your local school district directly.