

2026 Minnesota Legislative Priorities



Special Education Funding

Following drastic cuts to special education funding through the federal dismantling of the US Department of Education, we anticipate a continued deficit in special education funding critical to safe and responsive staffing in our schools, and to services like programming and transportation for special education students.

Childcare Funding

The current federal administration has suspended federal funding for Child Care and Development Funds (CCDF) in Minnesota, a decision currently under legal challenge after the Minnesota Attorney General's Office challenged the pause of funding. Pending the outcome of this legal action against the federal administration, state legislative action may be necessary in order to ensure that childcare providers across the state, including those within school based childcare programs, are able to receive necessary public funds to remain operational. In school based childcare programs, the loss of federal funds further strains local school district budgets and AFSCME Council 65 is committed to protecting our local public schools statewide.

Standing for a Dignified Retirement

At our October 2025 convention, delegates approved a resolution to commit our Council efforts to the pursuit of a reduced retirement age without penalty across Minnesota's various public pension systems. A retirement age of 65 with no penalty would help to provide working Minnesotans the opportunity for a more dignified retirement. We also stand in support of the strengthening of all other pension systems that our members and other working people contribute to.

Defense Work

Our work in this session is expected to mirror much of the work we did in the last legislative session in safeguarding hard fought worker protections like ESST, Minnesota Paid Leave (MPL), and unemployment for hourly school workers as well as those wins that improve and protect our communities like local government aid, county program aid, free school meals for all Minnesota kids, and state health and human services program funding in the wake of the federal HRI.

Protecting Workers Against Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Last session, we were part of an informational hearing on the topic and in this upcoming session we plan to work in a similar manner to advocate for workers' rights in the face of AI and to draw attention to the ways that unmitigated growth and implementation of AI across every sector can be harmful both for the jobs our members do and the clients and the public that they serve.

Prohibition on Local Government Use of NDAs

The use of Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) in the context of local government threatens the transparency and accountability of all public programs. We will continue to fight alongside other labor and community partners to build upon work done last session to bring forward a ban on the use of NDAs for local government officials.

Minnesota Judicial Branch Funding

We're working with Council 5 on a joint Judicial Branch Day on the Hill on February 19 for our members who work across the state's judicial branch. Our state legislature failed to provide an increased to continued operational funding for the branch in FY27 and so we're focusing our efforts on members of the judiciary committee in each legislative body, with the goal of a hearing for funding appropriations to the branch in order to fund fair wage increases to respect the critical work of the AFSCME clerical and technical staff who are essential to the operations of our state's legal system.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families(TANF)

The current federal administration has moved to suspend all funding of both SNAP and TANF programs for Minnesota families, programs our members administer across the state. The Minnesota's Attorney General's Office has filed a lawsuit challenging the pause of this funding, though the future of these funds is still uncertain at this time, putting Minnesota's most vulnerable families at risk.

Defense Against Gig Worker Systems in Healthcare

Various corporations have attempted to infiltrate healthcare systems across our state with "gig worker" structures, which permit the exploitation of healthcare workers who work via app as an independent contractor and therefore outside of employment protections and the right to organize a union. These app systems also serve to dilute bargaining units of permanent healthcare staff in a facility and pose a threat to consistent, qualified patient care teams who are best equipped to serve patients. AFSCME Council 65 stands opposed to the permissibility and expansion of these gig worker systems in our healthcare facilities.

Anti-Privatization

In early February, we will be part of an Anti-Privatization Summit with our We Make Minnesota (WMM) coalition partners in presenting to an audience of state legislators to provide background and lay groundwork to draft legislation for this session that protects public services, and builds an infrastructure to prevent further outsourcing and to bring some privatized programs back to the public sector where the work is performed by union labor and has the transparency and oversight of public programs. From there, we will alongside coalition partners and those same state legislators to put these ideas into action and law.

Statewide School Insurance Pool

We, alongside other allied unions like Education Minnesota and SEIU Local 284, have worked to advocate for a statewide school employee insurance pool to lower the costs and increase access to health insurance for all school employees statewide and to also lessen the burden on funding that insurance in our school districts. A bill establishing this program was introduced last session but not brought to committee and so our work this year will focus on bringing this bill as far in the legislative process as possible.

Rural EMS Funding

After securing one-time funding in the amount of \$24M in 2024, we know that the underfunding of critical rural EMS services across the state continues. This underfunding threatens response time and access to critical emergency medical response and also leaves these services vulnerable to acquisition by private equity firms and healthcare conglomerates that prioritize profits over community care. We support not only increased public funding for rural EMS services, but also legislation prohibiting private equity and real estate investment trust (REITs) acquisition, and increased control over providers of critical healthcare services.