

Testimony of Lisa A. Kilcourse
Elementary School Counselor
VP-elect Fairfield County
Connecticut School Counselor Association

in regards to

H.B. No. 5005 AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM
ENDING
JUNE 30, 2021.

Appropriations Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education
Public Hearing - February 13, 2020

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and respected members of the Appropriations Committee,

I am grateful for the opportunity to share in regards to H.B. No. 5005 AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2021.

We need to have more elementary school counselors and lower student to counselor ratios in our schools. As an elementary school counselor in my district, I consider myself lucky to be able to provide the foundation for college, career, and global readiness. Currently our district has 4 elementary schools. Each of these schools are assigned one school counselor.

Numerous studies demonstrate student engagement is determined by grade three. Early intervention by a school counselor can help students connect education to future goals. Because we have an elementary school counselor in each of our elementary schools, we are able to begin our services in Kindergarten.

We see an increase in need for services each year. Student anxiety has been growing across the board as well as the need to work on problem solving and coping skills.

Some of the services we provide in the elementary school setting are developmental counseling lessons to all students as tier 1 SEL. This allows us not only to work on social emotional skills explicitly but implicitly as well. We do this because we are able to build a connection and meet each student in the classroom. We also provide individual and group counseling services to our elementary students as well as family support and local resource connection.

As elementary school counselors we co-chair our building based safe school climate committees and are also part of our district safe school climate committee. This allows us to have a proactive and goal-oriented approach.

We are part of other tier interventions as well. We are on our school SRBI teams as the social emotional behavioral interventionist. We are tasked with developing and implementing

individualized student goals. We provide response to crises and are trained in CPI to ensure we are delivering best practices in times of distress.

We are also involved in creating a transition to the next school level with the counseling and administration teams. This ensures students can move smoothly to the next grade school.

We have an ongoing open door policy to provide consultation and collaboration with all staff as well as providing professional development to all staff. We also are part of the pupil personnel service delivery teams, alongside special education services.

Being the sole counselors in our buildings, our average ratios are over 300:1 but we still are providing connections to all students and staff by using our best practices from ASCA standards.

I thank you for taking the time to consider the need to have a school counselor in every school in Connecticut. I would be happy to discuss and answer any questions at 203-417-7960 or KilcourseL@gmail.com

Sincerely,

Lisa A. Kilcourse
Elementary School Counselor
VP-elect Fairfield County Connecticut School Counselor Association