



## **Connecticut School Counselor Association**

A Chartered Division of the American School Counselors Association

**Testimony of Curtis R Darragh IV**  
**School Counselor, Westside Middle School Academy, Danbury Public Schools**  
**Government Relations and Advocacy Member**  
**Connecticut School Counselor Association**

In regards to

Senator Osten, Representative Walker and respected members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Curtis Darragh IV, and I am a school counselor in the Danbury Public Schools and a member of the Government Relations and Advocacy Committee in the CT School Counselor Association. I am thankful 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.**

The Connecticut School Counselor Association (CSCA) is the professional organization representing the state's more than 1400 school counselors, while promoting leadership and advancing the professional school counseling identity. We are a charter division of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) which provides us with current and relevant information to enhance our skill level and professionalism. Nationally, we have three domains that promote the academic, social, emotional and college/career for all students.

These three domains that a school counselor covers in a CT public school is so vital to students so that they can have an equal access to a comprehensive school counseling program. Our certified and highly trained school counselors are experiencing high ratios within this state (1:466). Less than 25% of our students have access to an elementary school counselor and our secondary schools are problematic as they do not always have access to their school counselor. The state of Connecticut students in public schools are simply not receiving equitable comprehensive school counseling services in our three domains.

Currently in Danbury Connecticut, and in many areas throughout the state, we do not have any elementary school counselors, and our secondary school counselors have caseloads averaging 370-400 students each. I can tell you that the demands of this job are high and the amount of directions my colleague and I get pulled into, we simply are not reaching every student. From working with students academically, collaborating with staff to determine what services are needed to help a student become academically successful and consulting with outside providers, school counselors wear various hats to support these students. By the time students get to the sixth grade, they have already missed six years of elementary school counseling experience. Lessons in academic and social and emotional domains are not being met in the K-5 schools. At times students are not being introduced to college or career till they meet their school counselor in the middle school.



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At times, my colleagues and myself are seeing an increase in social and emotional needs in the state. The suicide rate is up 76% in ages 10-24. This is our targeted population. Often times, I wonder and think going into my school, “what if I miss this student” because of the high caseloads and other responsibilities that come with this career. School Counselors are trained to recognize mental health concerns with our students and provide short term counseling and regular check-ins with students who need it and to provide preventative services within the classroom to all students. School counselors are so important to the ever-changing world that these students are growing in.

There has been concerns for the rising lack of emotional connection in adolescents. School counselors are on the frontline of this and we are here to make sure all students can be emotionally connected. School counselors are needed in each level of education in a public school across this state. We need to start being proactive and preventative. I foresee a bright future for the students in Connecticut if we can work together.

The CSCA is happy to work with the appropriations committee, the Education Committee and anyone else on ways to provide long-term funding for additional school counselors in the public schools of Connecticut. The government relations and advocacy committee and I welcome further discussion around this.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

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