

Good Day Senator, Abrams, Representative Steinberg, Senator Anwar, Senator Kushner, Representative Gilchrest, Senator Hwang, Senator Somers, and Honorable Members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Danielle Clere , I am writing to you as a school based health clinician at Broad Brook Elementary School, employed by Community Health Center, a Federally Qualified Health Center.)

I appreciate the opportunity to present written testimony on *SBI An Act Equalizing Comprehensive Access to Mental, Behavioral ad Physical Health Care in Response to the Pandemic.*

School based health clinics are imperative for reaching those in need of services but who cannot access them whether this is due to parents not able to bring them into sessions or lack of money to pay for sessions. Many insurances require a \$25-50 copay which, can add up when your child needs weekly support or when there are larger families. I had a parent the other day tell me she would not be able to afford therapy services for her kids if they were not a part of a school with a SBHC due to having a big family with a \$45 copay per visit. She is grateful for the services provided because her kids get the help that they need.

*“I wouldn’t be able to afford therapy for my kids that need it because of having a \$45 copay and several kids in therapy.”*

I’ve seen a lot of parents when working in a non SBHC who back out of therapy b/c of the expense despite the need for services. I have several clients now with high copays or deductibles who are unable to afford services outside of school but are able to get their children help because of the SBHC.

Due to the COVID pandemic, we are also currently those among limited providers in the state who are able to see clients in person while many agencies and therapists have continued to provide telehealth services only. With the flexibility of being in the school, we are able to provide services safely to those and have been since September of 2020. Many families are appreciative of our ability to work with their children in person since many kids need in person meetings and do not do well via telehealth. If SBHC were not an option, they would not be getting the services they need.

I spoke with a student who I started working with in the beginning of the pandemic. She is grateful for the help she has received throughout the pandemic, as she has been struggling with the changes that come along with it. She told me:

“I feel better because I can use different coping skills when I’m sad. It’s nice to be able to come when I’m at school instead of after school.”

In summary, there are many benefits to SBHC and they have been helping children who have trouble accessing services for years. We reach those in need and are able to provide services to them that they need and would not be getting otherwise. There is further need for more school based clinics throughout the state so we can continue to provide services to those in need.