



CONTRIBUTING TO A JUST AND SUSTAINABLE WORLD

RE: SB-1 S.B. No. 1 (COMM) AN ACT EQUALIZING COMPREHENSIVE ACCESS TO MENTAL, BEHAVIORAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH CARE IN RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC.

March 16, 2021

Dear
Senator Abrams
Representative Steinberg,
Representative Anwar,
Representative Kushner,
Representative Gilchrest,
Senator Hwang,
Senator Somers,
Representative Petit.

I am writing to offer strong support for SB-1 S.B. No. 1 (COMM) AN ACT EQUALIZING COMPREHENSIVE ACCESS TO MENTAL, BEHAVIORAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH CARE IN RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC.

I am the interim principal of an early college magnet school that services scholars from up to thirty-two towns, with fifty percent of those scholars coming from Hartford. We are fortunate to have offices for Integrated Health Services (IHS), a school based health center (SBHC), located within our building to offer services to our scholars.

For the previous five years, I was the assistant principal and one of my primary tasks with redirecting scholars struggling with challenges that distracted them from their academics. Often times, those challenges went beyond having "a bad day" to serious social-emotional issues that had yet to be identified. Having access to social workers that can immediately respond when a scholar is in crisis is invaluable. Scholars in crisis have the potential to bring the school to a stand still as escalated behaviors require us to shelter-in-place and bring outside providers into the building. With support just a few moments away, many scholars can be de-escalated before other scholar's days are impacted. The ongoing support offered to those scholars through IHS helps establish a safe environment that creates more college ready climate. Scholars can access help while in school, which reduces absenteeism. This is crucial now more than ever as our student body has been greatly impact be the COVID pandemic, and already we are seeing an increase in scholars' seeking support as they return to in-person learning four days a week.

During the pandemic, having a Family Nurse Practitioner on staff in addition to the school nurse has meant we can conduct all necessary contracts tracing, and provide all necessary communications in a

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timely manner. As a school that has seen many in our community directly impacted by the COVID pandemic, this service has been invaluable and has allowed us to be transparent with all members of our community on a daily basis.

During this time and during a normal school year, the IHS staff provides our community many services such as preventative care, reproduction care, chronic illness care, dental care, physicals, and administered vaccines. They are in integral part of the CTRA family, and have been instrumental in helping many of our scholar's access the early college programming at our school.

Currently, IHS does not receive any of outside funding. It is a struggle, and these positions are always in danger of being cut. I strongly advocate for SB-1 S.B. No. 1 (COMM) AN ACT EQUALIZING COMPREHENSIVE ACCESS TO MENTAL, BEHAVIORAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH CARE IN RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC.

Be Well,

JT Foster
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