



Dear Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, and members of the Public Health Committee,

My name is Shannon Hanson, I'm a Program Manager for School-Based Health Care at the Community Health Center, and I would like to thank the Public Health Committee and the Governor for their recognition of School Based Health Care as a valued component of CT's health care service delivery model. I ask that you increase funding for School-Based Health Care in SB-1, An Act Equalizing Comprehensive Access to Mental, Behavioral and Physical Health Care in Response to the Pandemic.

CHC provides healthcare to close to 180 community and school locations, and specifically provided care to over 18,000 children during the last school year. Every child deserves a chance to be healthy and to reach their full potential in life, but many children have health problems that make it difficult for them to learn and succeed in a typical school year, let alone during this pandemic



when children faced the fear and uncertainty that it brought to them every day.

We all want the youth of CT to be healthy and thriving. School-Based Health Care helps young people with behavioral, physical, and oral health issues. I'd like to share a story from one of our Behavioral Health Clinicians working with a middle school student when the pandemic first hit us in March 2020. She told me,

“I worked with an 8th grade student last year who was failing almost all his classes, very unmotivated and had some mild depression. He engaged with SBBH and developed...skills for organization, gained some self-esteem, and connected with some external supports like an academic tutor. This student has successfully discharged from SBBH and is now in high school, doing well emotionally and academically.”

School-Based Health Care eliminates barriers to care including location, cost, and the social stigma that prevents many of our youth from accessing the care they need. The model of providing in-person, and now telehealth, treatment to students allows for more systematic detection, assessment, treatment, and



monitoring of student health regardless of a school's learning model or season of the year. It also allows a place for these students to seek the care they need but would not otherwise get. We all understand that life during the pandemic has been difficult for all, but we need to understand that as COVID positive rates continue to decrease and vaccinations increase, children will still be recovering from the trauma of this period. Their lives have been turned upside down during a time of critical emotional, physical, and social growth. Returning to "normal" will be yet another hurdle for them to overcome. We need to ensure that they have the necessary supports in place to successfully reintegrate into the "new normal."

Please increase funding to School-Based Health Care in our state so young people can continue to thrive and learn. This is critical to their future. This is critical to our state's future.

Thank you for supporting School-Based Health Care.