

March 1st, 2021



Testimony for H.B. No. 6439 (COMM) An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 13th, 2023, and Making Appropriations Therefor.

Governor's Proposed 2022-2023 Budget for Health Agencies

Dear Senator Abrams, Rep. Dillon Senator Somers, Rep. Kennedy and Members of the Health Subcommittee,

My name is Jennifer Genta, APRN and I work at Child and Family Agency's School Based Health Center (SBHC) as a Nurse Practitioner, serving children at The Friendship School (Waterford) and Regional Multicultural Magnet School (New London). Our agency operates 13 School-Based Health Centers in the communities of New London County, providing both medical and mental health services.

I had previously worked in a Primary Care outpatient office setting, which did not allow for much time to be spent on education and/or on overall focus of the patient as a whole. After working at SBHCs for 2 school years, I have found great satisfaction from being able to provide the needed education regarding a patient's disease process or for general health overall. Practicing at a SBHC has allowed me to spend additional time with each student to educate on healthy diet, lifestyle and the importance of exercise, which could assist with the substantial fight against obesity in our country.

One particular case that illustrates the important services that SBHC provides is a 5-year-old student I saw with multiple developmental delays and health concerns, who had slipped through the cracks of the healthcare system. He was born prematurely at 32 weeks, and suffered from developmental delays, including speech, fine motor skills and gross motor skills. This child was in kindergarten and continued to wear pull-ups, would not drink any liquids or eat foods at school, and his care has been uncoordinated with his specialists. In order to better serve this student and family I created a journal to record intake and output between home and school, list his daily medications, and a communication section to be used between teachers, occupational therapy, physical therapy, primary care, specialists and SBHC so everyone was on the same page and care given was clear to all. This process allowed time for education with the family on severe constipation, preventing him from an ER visit. This child has been to the ER several times for constipation due to the miscommunication of his medications and administration directions. Due to the focus on his dehydration at school, occupational therapy was able to focus on encouraging intake while at school. This child is now sipping water at school and has a bathroom plan, and the teacher, school nurse and specialists are able to view a more accurate picture of how often he is using the bathroom and consuming liquids. Without the time provided for assessment and collaboration in the school based setting, I am not sure how long this would have progressed without intervention. This child now has a clear plan for all caregivers, which will allow for effective growth and better overall care. Please continue to fully fund and expand School-Based Health Centers across Connecticut.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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