



**Testimony of Kiley Flynn
School Counseling Intern, Newington High School
Graduate Student Liaison
Connecticut School Counselor Association**

in regards to

**H.B. No. 6439 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM
ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR**

Appropriations Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education
Public Hearing -March 9, 2021

**Governor's Proposed FY 2022-2023 Budget for
Elementary and Secondary Education Agencies**

State Department of Education/School Counseling Funding

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and respected members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Kiley Flynn and I am a School Counseling Intern at Newington High School, a Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology student at the University of Connecticut, and a Graduate Student Liaison for the CT School Counselor Association. I am grateful for the opportunity to share in regards to **H.B. No. 6439 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.**

The Connecticut School Counselor Association (CSCA) is the professional organization representing the state's more than 1200 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.

If there is one thing I have learned in my experience as a graduate student, there is a drastic need in our state to provide all of our students K-12 with access to a school counselor; and CT has much room for growth in meeting this demand. The Covid-19 Pandemic has exacerbated this need as we continue to see a rise in the social emotional needs of our students who are experiencing loss, trauma, and lack of motivation towards schooling. Prior to the pandemic all of our students in CT did not have access to a school counselor. We are feeling this reality much more now as school student support services staff struggle to meet all of the social emotional needs of students. Less than 25% of our elementary students have access to a school counselor. CT now ranks **37th** in the country with an average school counselor to student ratio of **1:457**. With ratios this high, and in some cases even higher in our urban areas, middle school and high school students are also unable to have access to their school counselor. ***This is problematic because it then means that our students throughout Connecticut are not receiving equitable comprehensive school counseling services that include academic support, career advising and especially social emotional support.***



Connecticut School Counselor Association

A Chartered Division of the American School Counselors Association

School counselors are individuals who have important roles in schools and primarily focus on supporting students with their academic, social emotional, and career development. Some time is spent by school counselors meeting with students individually or in group settings. Other tasks include classroom lessons on various topics to support students in their social emotional and career development, supporting students in post-secondary planning and applying to college, coordinating standardized testing, coordinating 504 plans for students, supporting students with special educational needs, communicating with parents, communicating with school staff, and engaging with professional learning. These tasks allow school counselors to reach many students with a variety of needs, goals, and concerns in a systematic and individualized way. Much of what is done day to day has been adjusted based on adapting to the increased needs of students based on the ongoing pandemic, which will continue to have long lasting effects on our students and their families. While school counselors attempt to be preventative in the work that they do with students, there has been a strong shift over the last year towards reactive programming.

I would like to take a moment to share with you my experience this past year working in a school as a school counseling intern at Newington High School. In my school, caseloads for each counselor are around 215 students, which is below ASCA's recommended ratio of 250 students : 1 counselor. Still, it feels like counselors are being spread too thin to accommodate the needs of students. Each day I see the amazing school counselors that I work with reaching a "breaking point" and feeling that they do not do enough for their students, despite spendings endless hours - including non-contractual hours - responding to student needs in the academic, career, and social emotional domain. We have amazing counselors all across the State of Connecticut that show up each and every day for students, but there comes a point in time when the demands of the position are beyond what an individual can handle. When counselors are spread too thin, this results in students not getting the services that they need and results in challenges later on in the students academic career or life.

Based on student needs and the degree to which they are not being met, there is a great need for more school counselors in the State of CT to respond to those needs. Despite the great responsibility school counselors hold, the positions are often in danger of being eliminated based on school budget concerns. This exacerbates the problem by putting more responsibility on other school counselors and other students services providers by increasing their already overwhelming caseloads. We need more direct funding specifically for the hiring of school counselors, social workers, and school psychologists. In order to support students in closing the gaps that have grown based on the pandemic, we must provide students with adequate resources, including equitable access to a school counselor.

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