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March 2, 2011

Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to offer testimony today as a member of the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Association of School Based Health Centers (CASBHC). CASBHC is an advocacy and networking organization committed to increasing access to quality health care for all children and adolescents in Connecticut schools. As the official voice of the 78 school based health centers located in 18 communities across the state, over 51,444 children are enrolled regardless of whether or not they have health insurance.

Connecticut's School Based Health Centers have been delivering comprehensive health care to students in elementary, middle, and high schools for more than 25 years. The Centers have become part of the essential system of care for children and adolescents, providing physical, behavioral, and oral health services, particularly in communities where children may not have easy access to health care. Most are located in priority school districts, helping to ensure that these children have the best opportunity to maximize their educational programs by keeping them physically and emotionally healthy. Healthy students stay in school and have greater opportunities for educational success. In a recent survey of 1,000 middle and high school students, 18% of them said that they would have gone home or stayed out of school if it wasn't for the School Based Health Center.

With written parental permission, all children have full access to the physical, behavioral, and oral health services provided at their School Based Health Centers. Students and families benefit from the on-site care coordination provided by health center staff who are challenged to assist uninsured children and their families in locating additional resources -- such as specialty referrals, laboratory or radiology services, and necessary medications. In this sense, School Based Health Centers are the ultimate safety net provider for children.

We thank you for your support of School Based Health Centers and your recognition of their value in keeping children healthy and ready to learn.

Healthy Kids Make Better Learners

CASBHC

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