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**Testimony on HB 5014: AA Making Adjustments to State Expenditures and Revenues
for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2013**

**Appropriations Committee
February 22, 2012**

Submitted by: Stephen A. Karp, MSW

The NASW/CT chapter, representing over 3,200 members urges the Appropriations Committee to reject the proposed reduction in the Department of Public Health budget of \$400,000 in funding for School Based Health Clinics (SBHC). There are currently 78 Centers serving 19 communities with 68 of these Centers funded through DPH.

According to the National Mental Health Association, less than 1 in 5 of the 12.5 million children in need of mental health services actually receive them. Many of these children will not achieve academic success due to social, emotional and behavioral problems affecting school performance. SBHC's can help these students through means of prevention, early identification, intervention, counseling and support. Especially in both urban and rural communities where many families do not have access to affordable mental health care it is the SBHC's clinical social worker or other mental health provider that meets the child's mental health needs.

For many students the SBHC is the only health and mental health service available to them. SBHC's offer mental health treatment, address acute conditions, provide preventive medical exams, treat injuries, offer oral health care, provide follow-up on chronic conditions and offer health education. These are services that benefit the student, the student's family, and the school system by having a healthier student body. However services once dismantled are not easily gained back and the loss of services to school children will make it harder for those children to successfully meet their educational goals.

To help pay for restoring the SBHC funding we recommend that the Appropriations Committee fund DPH for implementation of the Licensed Master Social Worker licensure program that was passed in 2010. This license is projected to bring in over \$400,000 to the general fund in the first year at a cost far less than revenue gained.

Schools do not function in a vacuum. When students cross that school door they bring with them the life stresses of their family, impacts of poverty, trauma of witnessing violence, fears of being bullied, chronic and acute health problems, and in this poor economy where so many families are struggling to get by all of the concerns that a poor economy places on a family press on the student's mind. All of these factors are obstacles to learning. All of these obstacles are brought into the classroom. The medical and behavioral staff of SBHC's breaks through these barriers by providing students with a safe place to seek care within the school. This in turn allows students to return to the classroom ready to be productive in their educational learning. In this "Year of Education" at the Capitol we must not reduce services that are cost effective and proven to work in helping students to be successful within school.