 **School Based  
Health Centers**  
a program of *Family Centers*

February 14, 2013

Dennis Torres  
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Stamford CT 06901

**RE: Opposition to HB 6350 - An Act Concerning the Budget for the Biennium ending June 30, 2015**

Dear Senator Harp, Co-Chair, and Representative Walker, Co-Chair and Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee:

As the Director of School Based Health Centers in Stamford, I am submitting to the record this written testimony in opposition to HB 6350, *An Act Concerning the Budget for the Biennium ending June 30, 2015*. The Governor's budget proposes nearly a half-million dollars in cuts each year in baseline operational funding for SBHCs, in addition to the proposed complete elimination of funding for new or expanded Centers in the educational Alliance Districts.

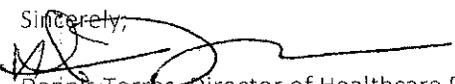
In December 2012, the Governor rescinded more than a half-million dollars from School Based Health Centers as part of his deficit reduction plan. The half-million dollars was taken from the 1.3 million dollars that had just been allocated by the Legislature for the new/expanded sites. Since the entire allocation for new or expanded health centers has been proposed to be eliminated in the FY2014 and FY2015 budget proposal, the continued reduction is being taken from operational funding to existing school based health centers.

These reductions come at a time when the state has an urgent interest in the mental health of children and adolescents – a critical function of SBHCs. School Based Health Centers eliminate barriers to care - particularly mental health care - including location, cost, and the social stigma that prevents many adolescents from accessing the care they need. SBHC providers are trained to meet the unique needs of children and adolescents. The SBHC model that provides treatment in the school allows for more systematic detection, assessment, treatment, and monitoring of student health.

At a time when our health infrastructure is changing and being bolstered to handle the weight of the millions entering the health care system, SBHC's are a wise investment. In Stamford, we are in all three of the public high schools, two middle schools and a planned new SBHC at another middle school. We have over 4,000 students enrolled, logging over 5,000 visits last year for health, behavioral health and dental services. Any cuts to programming and new funding directly impacts the positive health outcomes we produce at each clinic each year we are open.

We urge you to avoid these drastic reductions to School Based Health Center services. For so many children and families, the SBHC is the only safety net that keeps children in school and parents at work.

Sincerely,

  
Dennis Torres, Director of Healthcare Programs  
Family Centers Inc., School Based Health Centers