

SB 848

Dear Representative Susan Johnson and Senator Terry Gerratana, and members of the Committee;

My name is Rhonda Capuano, Program Director of the Dr. Robert E. Appleby School Based Health Centers in Norwalk, CT. I am writing today in opposition of SB 848, Section 3(b) proposes to repeal SBHCs in Alliance Districts. The 3 SBHC sites in Norwalk continue to serve students presenting with various health-related issues but are alarmed by an increasing number of complex student mental health issues that require additional treatment, outreach, and collaboration with families and other health providers.

The most noteworthy aspect of this year's cases is the severity of mental health problems and the impact on students' functioning. Of these cases, at just one SBHC site, a third of our students receiving mental health counseling have been under the care of our adolescent psychiatrist, and most of them have been prescribed medication. This is an all time high. The students continue to receive counseling and medication management from the social worker and adolescent psychiatrist. The two most prevalent problem areas, as has been the rule for years, are various forms of mood disorders (Depression) and anxiety disorders. What is unique is the fact that so many of these patients require medication, have had repeated inpatient hospitalizations, and suffer severe impairment of functioning at school and at home and as a result require multiple levels of care and concrete services from additional providers. In addition, patients with anxiety disorders generally require a greater number of visits than with other problems and often more coordination. Other problem areas affecting many of the patients seen include parent-child relational problems, adjustment problems, academic problems, self-injurious behaviors, an eating disorder and various levels of substance experimentation and abuse. Cases have required collaboration with inpatient hospitalizations and intensive outpatient treatment programs in which the SBHC provides the treatment during the transition from one level of care to another seamlessly.

The above illustrates what is being experienced this school year at just one of our SBHC sites. In regard to providing physical and mental health care and prevention to our youth, this is not the time to pull resources away from successful service models, such as school based health centers.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,
Rhonda Capuano

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"Healthy Kids Make Better Learners"