

HB 1137

Joann Eaccarino

Sen. Gerratana, Rep. Johnson, and Members of the Public Health Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 1137: An Act Concerning School Based Health Centers. My name is JoAnn Eaccarino and I am President of the Board of Directors of the CT Association of School Based Health Centers, the official voice of School Based Health Centers in Connecticut.

Testimony presented by the Executive Director describes our response to Bill 1137 in general. I would like to respond to Section 5 of the bill. It has been very advantageous over the years to have the SBHC Advisory Committee comprised of the Departments of Children and Families, Mental Health and Addiction Services, Social Services, and Education in addition to the Department of Public Health and representatives from the CT Association of School Based Health Centers. Together we have worked on issues of access, services, reimbursement, funding opportunities, and collaboration of SBHCs with school support services.

The Department of Public Health has the major role in establishing standards, including reporting requirements. They license the school based health centers, determine the data needed to support results-based accountability, ensure standards of care are being provided, require local advisory boards to support community collaboration, and determine the level of licensing required of the providers.... and they fund us. To include the Department of Education as a co-manager in the basic decisions about uniform standards, staffing ratios, third-party reimbursement, and reporting requirements would not be helpful and could lead to conflict in the day-to-day operations of the School Based Health Centers.

In the 25+ years of School Based Health Centers in Connecticut, the universal practice has been to offer registration in the health center to every student in the school with their parent/guardian's permission. We believe that this constitutes informed consent for a service that would otherwise be provided in a private healthcare provider's office, community health center, child guidance clinic, or emergency room, all of which require written parental permission to treat. This is an Advanced Practice, beyond that which the school nurse or school social worker provides. In that permission the School Based Health Center obtains information about the student's health history, allergies, medications, community providers, and information about insurance. In my personal experience with the School Based Health Centers that I manage, approximately 5% of parents respond to an interest form with a statement that they DO NOT want their child receiving services from the SBHC. They are always welcome to reverse that decision, but getting active permission from them is not only a Connecticut requirement, but a practice supported by the National Assembly on School Based Health Care. We therefore oppose a passive, or "opt out" mechanism for enrollment in the School Based Health Center.