

Sen. Gerratana, Rep. Johnson, members of the Public Health Committee, good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to concerning school based health centers. My name is Leah Lucarelli. I am a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner at Macdonough Elementary School – SBHC operated by Community Health Center, Inc. I am here to testify in favor of SB 415, AN ACT ESTABLISHING ADDITIONAL SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS.

CHC's expertise in running school based health centers dates back over twenty years, when we opened our first SBHC at the McDonough School in Middletown. Since then, schools across the state have asked CHC to run school based health centers in their schools. In 2013, CHC saw over twelve thousand students for all school based services across the state. For mental health services alone, CHC has providers in 38 schools, mostly clinical social workers. In 2013, they cared for one thousand, eight hundred students from kindergarten to high school seniors. Add to this our medical and dental providers and we are having a significant positive impact on students across the state.

Research is clear: students are more likely to participate in treatment in school based settings than they are outside the school walls. We remove waits and delays, eliminate the barriers of access, and respond to requests from teachers and school administrators for help.

This can be especially important when communities experience a trauma, like

Sandy Hook did last year, or the current issues around drug overdoses in East Windsor. In these situations, school based health centers can provide services for the whole community.

We know that early recognition of problems and prompt treatment is essential. Having medical and mental health professional right in the school is effective and efficient. We urge you to support the expansion of school based health centers across the state, whether as part of a comprehensive school based health center, or centers providing one specific service. We operate both models, based on each community's wishes. CHC is available to assist additional communities, either as an external advisor, or running school based health centers fully integrated with our statewide network of health centers. Working together, we can do a better job of identifying, treating, and helping school children with medical, mental health, and oral health issues. Thank you.