



GROTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Groton, Connecticut

Administration Offices

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March 11, 2014

Dear Public Health Committee Members:

RE: S.B. No. 415 AN ACT ESTABLISHING ADDITIONAL SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS

Please accept this statement as an expression of my strong support for the establishment of two additional school-based health centers to serve the children in Groton Public Schools. The additional health centers are needed to provide much needed support for schools that service the large military community located near the U.S. Naval Submarine Base in Groton. The additional school-based health centers are requested for Pleasant Valley Elementary School and Mary Morrisson Elementary School. In addition, children from Charles Barnum Elementary School will also be serviced by these centers. Those three schools are located near the Naval Sub Base and a significant portion of each of those schools has children whose parents are active military members.

The services provided by the school-based health center will greatly assist these children whose lives are frequently disrupted due to military transfers. The staffing of each health center would include a nurse practitioner, who will be instrumental in helping to meet the medical needs of the children. The health center staff is instrumental in facilitating the registration of children by conducting physical examinations and coordinating the receipt of medical records. Each health center will also include a clinician to provide mental health services to this very at-risk population. Highly mobile families who experience frequent disruptions due to military transfers and deployments are a particularly vulnerable segment of our community. The mental health clinicians will provide much needed support to these families.

In addition to servicing children of active duty service members, the population of both Pleasant Valley Elementary School and Mary Morrisson Elementary School contains a large segment of children who are eligible for free and reduced lunch. Approximately 40% of the students at each school qualify for free/reduced-priced meals. These children also come to school with physical and mental health conditions that concern staff members a great deal. The school-based health clinics would provide excellent support to this under-served population as well.

Groton Public Schools takes great pride in servicing all the children in our community including dependents of our active military members, as well as children from economically distressed families. The staff is very knowledgeable and deeply committed to these children. The additional school-based health centers would be an enormous asset to our school community and would greatly enhance our ability to meet the needs of the children and their families.

On behalf of the children of Groton Public Schools, I urge passage of this bill.

Sincerely,

Michael H. Graner, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

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