

Barbara J. Sloan  
SB 415

Dear Public Health Committee members:

I am in favor of S.B. 415, which establishes additional school-based health centers for students in Groton and East Hartford. I believe these centers belong in every school in the state, not only for convenient community-based health care, but also because many children have serious mental health needs that are not addressed out side of schools. Mental health is my area of expertise, so I will focus my comments on this area.

For some years, I was the director of a two-county juvenile intervention program in SC, covering a territory almost as large as the entire state of CT. We frequently received referrals from schools regarding behavioral problems. Very often these were problems that could have been better served in a school setting by qualified mental health professionals. In fact, I often met with students at their schools to offer mental health services.

In my more recent career as a freelance writer, I spoke with a high school student in inner-city Baltimore who was a very talented artist but despondent over the suicide of a friend. He told me that his school-based mental health program was closing and he would have no access to the counseling he very much needed. This well-built 16 year old had tears in his eyes because he could see no way out of the ghetto under these circumstances.

Connecticut has been at the forefront of many initiatives in recent years, including last year's landmark gun bill that included funds for mental illness. Can we afford to allow students who may have no other access to health care fall by the way? I think not.

Do we want to allow another Adam Lanza to go unnoticed until he or she gets to the point of violence? I certainly hope not.

Please send this bill to the floor for a vote. Our childrens' futures and therefore the future of the state of Connecticut hangs in the balance.

Sincerely,

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