



Good morning Representative Urban, Senator Bartolomeo, and members of the Committee on Children. My name is Jesse White-Fresé, and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Association of School Based Health Centers. My testimony is in support of Bill 5136, An Act Concerning the Health of Children.

School Based Health Centers (SBHCs) provide students with immediate access to care for many serious health issues that impact school performance and academic success. SBHCs are one of the most effective ways to keep students healthy and attending school so they can continue to learn - and the care provided there is cost-effective as well.

Connecticut's SBHC have a strong commitment to child and adolescent health and have taken a leadership role nationally based on its integrated care model in SBHCs, where the sites provide medical and behavioral health co-located in the health center. Some sites have added dental services as well. The sites take their charge very seriously and strive every day to meet the complex health issues faced by students. The child poverty rate in Connecticut continues to climb, and school based health centers have been present every day to help students cope with a myriad of issues that impact their health and their academic performance.

Connecticut's SBHCs are working hard to align with health care reforms to provide the highest quality care possible, while managing costs and improving health outcomes for young people to avoid the costly services of emergency departments and years of unmet health needs. Connecticut is proud to be one of four states nationally participating in a National Quality Initiative that is developing performance standards for SBHCs. We are one of two states piloting a rigorous set of standards to develop an SBHC specific 'medical home' model. We are working very closely with the Committee on Children in a results-based accountability project to demonstrate that the state's investment in SBHCs is yielding improved health and academic outcomes for youth. The 96 SBHC sites funded by the Department of Public Health have succeeded in creating RBA Report Cards to illustrate improvements in care for asthma, improved functioning in students that receive mental health treatment, reduction in sexually transmitted diseases, increasing immunization rates, screening and treatment for depression, BMI testing and nutritional counseling, and more.

Bill 5136 calls for the establishment of a program to evaluate the health of children throughout the state. Reports such as the Children's Behavioral Health Implementation Plan have been effective as they catalogued the state of behavioral health services for children in Connecticut, and made recommendations for improvement to create a more coordinated system of care that will improve outcomes for children. Similarly, a report of the overall health of children in the state would serve as a foundation for assessment of the factors impacting child health, the current service delivery system for children, and could serve as a platform for greater coordination between agencies, providers, and programs. An understanding of the current child health landscape can lead to targeted, effective improvements in programs such as School Based Health Centers.

Please call upon me if I can provide any information or assistance.

Respectfully submitted,
Jesse White-Fresé
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Healthy Kids Make Better Learners