

Senate Bill No. 299, An Act Concerning the Adoption of Regulations to Establish Minimum Standards for School Based Health Centers.
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Legislative Office Building

Testimony submitted in opposition to SB No. 299

Submitted by:

**Community Health Center, Inc.
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Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in reference to SB No. 299, An Act Concerning The Adoption of Regulations to Establish Minimum Standards for School Based Health Centers. My name is Dr. Margaret Flinter; I am the Senior VP and the Clinical Director of the Community Health Center, Inc., a statewide federally qualified health center headquartered at 635 Main Street in Middletown , Connecticut

I speak against this legislation, because it does not appear to advance care, access, safety, or quality and would seem to confuse, not clarify, the meaning of school based health centers in Connecticut for those constituents which matter most in this discussion: students, parents, school administrators, teachers, and civic officials.

The term School Based Health Center is a description, not a regulatory designation. Each school based health center is licensed by the Department of Public Health, and if applicable, by the Department of Children and Families, either directly or indirectly, for behavioral health services to children.

CHC, Inc. has operated school based health centers in Connecticut since 1992 when we opened our first SBHC at the MacDonough School in Middletown, and other schools and communities soon began to approach us with interest in developing a SBHC. We know from firsthand experience the challenges and

controversy many communities faced in the decision to have a SBHC in their school, and the reluctance on the part of some members of the community to have a SBHC at all, or to have all three of the major primary care services (medical, dental, behavioral health) offered. Although our first school based health centers offered medical, dental, and behavioral health services, we learned quickly that in some communities, there was a need to go slowly and start with only one of the services—the service that their community felt was most important, for which they believed there was the greatest need, and practically speaking, for which the school had space to accommodate us.

The SBHC is always a guest in the school. Today, CHC, Inc. has 51 licensed school based health centers and provides mobile dental services to many more. Almost all of our SBHCs started with a single service, and expanded from there. That initial service might have been dental—or medical--or behavioral health. Nearly 30 of our SBHCs today offer all three services. In time, it is likely that the other schools will all offer all three services but this is a decision for local schools and communities to make.

The proposed legislation does not clarify, but rather confuses the public with the addition of the term “expanded school health site”. It does not mandate any significant change in service based on these designations, such as requiring sponsoring school based health centers or even the “expanded school health sites” to meet a minimum threshold of hours of services, or days per week, or accessibility during vacations and after hours. Simply put, it seems to attempt to solve a problem that does not exist, and in this extremely difficult legislative year, it does not seem to warrant your further time and attention.

Thank you.