

Dear Legislators,

As only in my third year as Coordinator of the SBHC Grant in Windham Public Schools, I write this testimony based on what these years have shown me regarding the enormous work school based health centers do for our children. Clearly, the demographics of the Windham School System are overwhelmingly Medicaid dependent, although there are percentages of privately insured students. Each of you is aware that with such a large percentage of low income students and even undocumented students with no insurance there is a tremendous need. What the staff of our health centers do on a daily basis is difficult to measure. How do you put a percentage or put into a bar graph the guiding force that our behavioral health clinicians offer to students? What number is powerful enough to uncover a potential mental illness or suicidal tendency in a young adult because our APRN's do a mental health screening with every physical, something all physicians do NOT do?

The town of Windham has sadly lost two toddlers to physical abuse by their mother's boyfriends, a clear indication of poor choices being made by the young women of our area. The school based health center therapist works with our young girls to help them 'find their voice' by teaching them how to make good decisions in relationships, how to use their own power to stay safe.

The potential cuts to our line item could be devastating to the health of our health centers. The most important piece of what and who we are is that we are there ALL day, EVERY day of the school year. Reduced funding leaves no options but to cut hours. What happens to the student who needs us on Monday at 2PM, but because of reductions we are not there?

I ask for the students of Windham and all towns who are blessed to have school based health centers to think not just twice, but three or four times before making a decision regarding our line in the state budget. Clearly, there must be decisions made, but please, keep what is working....and school based health centers are working and making a difference in the lives of our students and their families.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Lynne P. Weeks
SBHC Grant Coordinator
Windham Public Schools