

Testimony before the Health Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee – 2/18/16

Submitted by JoAnn Eaccarino, Associate Director School Based Programs
Child and Family Agency of Southeastern CT, Inc.

Sen. Bye, Rep. Walker, Sen. Gerratana, Rep. Dillon, Members of the Health Subcommittee:

My name is JoAnn Eaccarino, Associate Director for the School Based Programs of Child & Family Agency of Southeastern Connecticut. The Agency operates 18 School-Based Health Centers in five communities throughout New London County. I am here to testify in opposition to the proposed cuts to School Based Health Center funding.

My testimony is very short and asks you to consider just two things: the impact to the children and families that rely on the School Based Health Centers and the fiscal implications that will ensue.

At School Based Health Centers children receive barrier-free care without regard to transportation, unavailable appointment times, work schedules of parents, outstanding balances, etc. In the past two years the number of children using our services has increased 6%...but more importantly, the percentage of children who use the services and have HUSKY/Medicaid insurance has risen to 62%. Where will these children go? Who will serve them?

As an example of just one of many services provided by School-based Health Centers, we served over 590 children with asthma in the last year, which is 12% of the children we see. 227 of them required one or more nebulizer treatments during their visits. The cost of a visit to the SBHC with one nebulizer treatment is billed at \$150. Had these children not had access to the School Based Health Center, they would have likely gone to the emergency department at a conservative estimate of \$1000 for the visit. In actuality, only 8 students needed to be transported to the emergency room because they didn't improve with treatment at the SBHC. The other 219 did improve and were sent back to class. We likely saved 219 visits to the ED, and at a minimum \$1000/visit, that's \$219,000 or the entire cost of 1.6 fully funded SBHCs. This also doesn't take into account the loss of work time for parents, who may not get paid time off or at the extreme, may lose their jobs because they reached the maximum allowable time off. It just doesn't make financial sense to diminish this barrier-free, evidence-based, cost-effective system of care because in the end the cost both in terms of money and family stress and hardship will be far greater.

While realizing the difficult decisions that you must make, I ask you to please re-examine the consequences of this enormous proposed cut to the line for School Based Health Centers.
Thank You.