Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Deborah Chameides and I am a registered voter in West Hartford, Ct. I am here today in my role as Health Services Coordinator for the Hartford Public Schools. (state your role and organization or role as family member or student benefitting from services).

I am here to testify on the Governor’s proposed biennial budget. I am especially concerned about yet another proposed cut of almost $200,000 to the School Based Health Clinics line item in the Department of Public Health (DPH) budget.

I care about children. Every child deserves a chance to be healthy and to reach their full potential in life. But many children have health problems that make it difficult for them to learn and succeed. We want young people in CT to be healthy and thriving. School Based Health Centers (SBHCs) are an effective, integrated and cost-effective way to help young people with their health challenges – including their mental health issues, their physical health concerns, or their oral health challenges. Supporting students with their health challenges where they spend most of their waking hours during the week – right in schools – also contributes to keeping them learning in classrooms, reducing absenteeism and improving graduation rates for youth.

Our medical and central clinics in Hartford support some of our most vulnerable children. Our medical providers help to manage chronic diseases like Type 1 Diabetes, Sickle Cell Disease, and Asthma, which is prevalent among our student
population. Through this daily management, we reduce chronic absenteeism and give our children better chances at academic success.
Our dental providers provide children with access to dental care during the school day, which many of our families may not have the resources to access on their own. Dental screenings detect children in dire need of dental care who are not learning as they should be due to tooth pain.
Our medical and dental providers educate our students about healthy decision making, providing them with the important lifelong skills they will need to stay healthy well into adulthood.

Our School-Based Health Center program bills Medicaid for medical and dental services so that we can use our grant monies to help us pay for care for uninsured or underinsured students.

I urge you to protect the health and wellbeing of our youngest CT residents by supporting the essential and core services that School Based Health Centers provide. Please maintain funding for SBHCs in our state so that young people can continue to thrive and stay in school. This is critical to their future and to the future of our state.

Thank you for supporting School Based Health Centers!