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

My name is Emily Ruegg and I am a registered voter in West Hartford, CT. I am writing today in my role as a Physician Assistant in a Hartford School Based Health Center.

I am writing 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.

One example of this is a 15 year old student I took care of yesterday who came into the school based health clinic complaining of a sore throat. Upon examination and testing I discovered that he had strep throat. When I called home, his mother was relieved that I was able to provide treatment in the clinic so that she did not need to leave work to bring him to the emergency room. She was also happy to hear that I was able to dispense a full course of antibiotics from
the clinic as this student does not currently have health insurance, and that he only needed to miss one day of school as I started the treatment immediately.

Another example is a 14 year old male who I saw in the clinic this past week and came in complaining of a rash to his face after eating mushrooms at home the night before. He came into the clinic very uncomfortable and itchy. I recognized right away that he was having an allergic reaction and gave him Benadryl immediately. I was able to observe him in the clinic for 30 minutes with signs of improvement to his symptoms. I was able to dispense several doses of Benadryl for the student to be able to take at home for any recurrent symptoms, allowing him to avoid a costly ER visit for his allergic reaction.

These are just two examples out of the dozens of kids I see in the clinic daily. Every day I keep kids in school and out of the Emergency Department. We are here to serve the community, keep kids in school, keep parents working and decrease expenses for the state. Every dollar spent on a School Based Health Center provides exponential savings.

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!

Emily Ruegg PA-C
Porter Dr, West Hartford
860-695-1371