Shavon Russell RN Hartford Public Schools

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
On Governor’s proposed Biennial Budget FY2020-21

H.B. 7148 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNium ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2021
March 1, 2019

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Shavon Russell and I am a registered voter in West Hartford, and work in Hartford Public Schools. I am here today in my role as a School Nurse in a School Based Health Center serving the North End of Hartford at Rawson Steam School and MLK Jr Social Justice Middle School.

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.

Just this school year alone our SBHC has referred children to CCMC for undiagnosed health conditions requiring immediate and ongoing care. One student was a transfer in from the state of Georgia with an undiagnosed heart murmur, the other was a transfer from Mexico with an underlying seizure disorder which left undetected could have had grave consequences for both children in and out of school.

The SBHC at Sara J. Rawson Elementary school serves the entire North End of Hartford performing anywhere from 5-10 school entry physicals and administering 20-30 vaccines required for school entry per month. This immediate access to care without regard to race, religion, national origin, insurance, or documentation status allows the children to attend school as soon as the same day of their physical and vaccines. We also perform 50+ episodic care visits per month treating a variety of conditions such as: lice, ringworm, conjunctivitis, strep throat, rashes, ear infections, urinary tract infections, sprains, strains, migraines, bronchitis, just to name a few. The parents access to immediate cost effective care allows them to minimize time away from work and the student’s time away from school.

Although we never require or collect any payment upfront for services rendered, our billing department conducts a thorough search of appropriate resources for reimbursement for clinic services provided.
Some of the sources of reimbursement include CT state Husky A, B, and C, out of state Medicaid from NY, Fl, GA, NC, and VA just to name a few and private insurance when available.

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!

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