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

H.B. 7148 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIAL ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2021, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFORE

[03/01/2019]  
[Linda Smith - Bridgeport]

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

My name is Linda Smith and I am a registered voter and have worked in the City of Bridgeport for over 25 years. I am here today in my role as SBHC Program Director for Optimus Health Care located in the City of Bridgeport.

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 Centers line item in the Department of Public Health (DPH) budget.

Every child deserves a chance to be healthy and to reach its 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, and 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.

I want to share Diosnelly’s reason for coming to our SBHC; she wrote, “I come to the clinic for counseling because I was very depressed and sometimes thought about ending my life. I get a lot of help here when I’m feeling down, which lucky for me it’s not very often no more” This is the impact of SBHC and shows how important SBHCs are to our students.
There are 20,000 plus students in the Bridgeport School System and we currently operate SBHCs in 11 schools. We provide quality primary health care to the students, which has a positive impact on their basic, human needs.

Students often come down to the SBHC just to vent about their frustrations, clear their heads and go back to class and continue with their studies; teachers have said I do not know what you did, but thank you. The SBHC program serves as a safety net for students as they know it is a safe place to go no matter their need.

A large number of students fall in the range of uninsured due to their residency status and services are provided to them through the SBHC and Optimus Health Care Inc.

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!