Testimony of Heather Casale  
School Counselor, Coventry High School  
in support of  
S.B. 956 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING A COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL COUNSELOR PROGRAM.  
Education Committee- March 6, 2019  

Representative Sanchez, Senator McCrory, Representative McCarty, Senator Bertel, and esteemed members of the Education Committee, my name is Heather Casale and I am a School Counselor in Coventry, CT and serve as the Regional Vice President Elect for the Windham/Tolland County for the Connecticut School Counselors Association (CSCA). Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 956- AN ACT CONCERNING A COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL COUNSELOR PROGRAM.

Senate Bill 956 adds that through a collaborative process the state department of education would work with CSCA to create guidelines to help ensure all students have equitable access to a comprehensive school counseling program. This will help to bridge the gap of student access to academic, social-emotional and post-secondary and career readiness curriculum through a comprehensive program. This would also help to ensure this curriculum is delivered by a certified Professional School Counselor. This would also be able to ensure that all Professional School Counselors have adequate training in their field of work. Currently, there are no requirements for school counseling programs to be implemented at any level in Connecticut school districts. Fewer than 25% of Connecticut’s elementary school children have access to school counselors and comprehensive school counseling programming.

The work that I do with my students is crucial in their academic, personal and post-secondary successes. As a counselor I work with my students to develop life skills for in and out of the classroom. Such things like time management, prioritization and coping strategies to deal with stress. Over the past several years I have been observing the drastic increase in student stress levels and the amount of pressure they place upon themselves. I am responsible for advocating for students rights and to help give them the benefit of the doubt, when maybe no one else would. With my training I am comfortable and confident in helping all students get connected with their post high school dreams. We work together to explore opportunities and passions to plan for their next steps. I have students who enjoy school more than going home at the end of the day. I am responsible for helping that student feel safe while in school, in addition to advocating and doing my part to help ensure safety at home. My work within the school is essential to students well being and overall success. Ensuring there is equity for all students to receive this level of care is so important. Adopting the policies that require schools to utilize a Comprehensive School Counseling Program and hire Professional School Counselors with proper training is imperative.
I would ask that you amend the underlying bill to include the Connecticut School Counselor Association proposal to also have the State Board of Education adopt guidelines and recommendations for appropriate student-to-school counselor ratios and funding to increase access to student support services. Further ensuring equitable access for all students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Heather Casale
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