Testimony of Samantha Eisenberg
[College & Career Counselor]

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 Samantha Eisenberg and I am a counselor in Connecticut and a Connecticut School Counselor Association Board of Directors Member. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 956- AN ACT CONCERNING A COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL COUNSELOR PROGRAM.

Research shows that implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program has a positive impact on student outcomes, including improved attendance, reduced discipline, improved grades, increased SAT scores, increased graduation rates, increased college-going and persistence rates. A K-12 comprehensive school counseling program is planned, sequential, developmentally appropriate and is delivered by a certified school counselor with adequate training. Comprehensive school counseling programs address each student’s social-emotional, career, post-secondary planning, and academic needs. A comprehensive school counseling program is data driven, and includes a collaboration effort with school administrators, classroom teachers, student support services, school staff, and community stakeholders. Currently, there are no requirements for school counseling programs to be implemented at any level in Connecticut school districts. In fact, fewer than 25% of Connecticut’s elementary school children have access to school counselors and comprehensive school counseling programming. Current research in Connecticut has identified that students in districts with elementary school counselors have improved performance outcomes versus districts without, regardless of location or socioeconomic status (Parzych, Donohue, Gaesser, Chiu, 2019). The elementary school years set the foundation for developing the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for children to become healthy, competent, and confident learners.

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. Research in Connecticut shows that lower-performing schools and schools in lower-socioeconomic status communities maintain higher caseloads than higher-performing schools (Parzych, Donohue, Gaesser, Chiu, 2019). In CT:

• High-performing schools average school counselor-to-student ratios:
  o High School Level = 1:182, Middle School Level = 1:211
• Low-performing schools average school counselor-to-student ratios:
  o High School Level = 1:285, Middle School Level = 1:891

Lowering ratios allows school counselors to effectively deliver a comprehensive school counseling program to better meet students’ academic, career, post-secondary planning, and social-emotional needs (Parzych, Donohue, Gaesser, Chiu, 2019). Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Samantha Eisenberg
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Connecticut School Counselor Association, Director & Public Relations Chair