Testimony of Dr. Louisa Foss-Kelly in support of
SB 956 (Raised) An Act Concerning a Comprehensive School Counselor Program

Representative Sanchez, Senator McCrory, Representative McCarty, Senator Bertel and
honorable members of the Education Committee. My name is Dr. Louisa Foss-Kelly and I am
Professor of Clinical Mental Health Counseling and Graduate Program Coordinator at Southern
Connecticut State University, and a resident of Old Saybrook. As a professor and as a parent of
elementary school students, I offer my strongest support for SB 956 (Raised) An Act Concerning
a Comprehensive School Counselor Program.

We are living in a time of serious mental health crisis. Adolescents are at increasing risk of dying
by suicide. Drug addiction has reached epidemic levels. Marijuana and e-cigarette use among
adolescents is soaring. Our children are growing up with ever-increasing levels of anxiety and
stress, a risk factor for developing later drug and alcohol problems and psychological problems.
Now more than ever, we need school counselors to actively intervene and prevent problems
among the children in our communities. We need a comprehensive school counseling model
that will prevent psychological problems down the road. We need more school counselors in
Connecticut schools.

I formerly worked in maximum security facility for adolescent boys who had committed felonies.
Sadly, my clients often talked about emotional, physical or sexual abuse they had endured or
other traumas they experienced. The tragedy is that for so many of these boys, I was the first adult
they ever told. How might their lives have been different if a school counselor was present to
notice that they were gradually withdrawing socially, performing poorly in school, or dropping
out of extra-curricular activities? What pain could have been avoided?

School counselors are uniquely trained to work with other student support staff to notice when
children and adolescents are in distress, before problems develop. As a professor, I teach a drug
and alcohol counseling course for graduate school counseling students. The stories they share
with me about the challenges of their students and the many ways they provide vital help are truly
inspiring. I urge you to consider the difference it would make if these students were offered more
opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills in Connecticut schools.

Pleases amend the underlying bill to include the Connecticut School Counselor Association
(CSCA) proposal to also have the State Board of Education adopt guidelines and
recommendations for appropriate student-school counselor ratios, and to appropriate funds to
effectively implement such guidelines.

Sincerely,

Louisa Foss-Kelly, PhD, LPC
Professor
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