Representative Sanchez, Senator McCrory, Representative McCarty, Senator Berthal, and respected members of the Education Committee, my name is Kristin Goodwin and a School Counselor at one of the CT Technical High Schools. My caseload consists of 255 students in grades nine through twelve. I am also the Vice President Elect for Middlesex and Tolland counties within the Connecticut School Counselor Association. I wanted to share a testimony in support of Senate Bill 956- AN ACT CONCERNING A COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL COUNSELOR PROGRAM.

The Connecticut School Counselor Association (CSCA) is the professional organization representing the state’s more than 1400 school counselors, while promoting leadership and advancing the professional school counseling identity. We are a charter division of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) which provides us with current and relevant information to enhance our skill level and professionalism.

I strongly and wholeheartedly support Senate Bill 956. In my prior role working in an elementary/middle school, I was able to implement a comprehensive school counseling program and witnessed first-hand it’s benefits. With a social-emotional curriculum in place, students learned how to solve problems and conflicts effectively, developed friendship skills, learned how to repair relationships, learned how to be assertive, and, among many others, learned what happens to their brain when experiencing negative emotions and how to healthily manage them. Learning these social-emotional skills, along with skills for academic success, will only benefit students within and outside the school setting and in many facets of their lives well beyond the classroom. To me, healthy social and emotional development is the prerequisite for academic development. As a society, we must ALL learn emotional hygiene, and that is what equal access to a comprehensive school counseling program for ALL students will ensure.

Research proves the above statements, however, Connecticut has yet to act. A 2017, ASCA position paper, The School Counselor and Comprehensive School Counseling Programs, notes, “School counselors design and deliver comprehensive school counseling programs that improve a range of student learning and behavioral outcomes (Carey & Dimmitt, 2012). These programs are comprehensive in scope, preventive in design and developmental in nature.” Another study by Parzych, Donohue, Gaeesser, Chiu (2019) notes that despite location and socio-economic status, performance outcomes have improved for students in districts with an elementary school counselor. This research also identified that higher performing schools had an average lower school counselor-to-student ratio High School Level = 1:182, Middle School level = 1:211) while low-performing schools had on average significantly higher school counselor-to-student ratio: High School Level – 1:285, Middle School Level = 1:891.

The enactment of this bill can only bring about positive and significant change for ALL of Connecticut’s youth, and ultimately, change the world we live in. I can honestly say, I wish I had such access when I was in school. I am passionate about helping my students break down any barrier to their success and dream of the day that ALL of Connecticut’s youth have equal opportunity to work with a certified school counselor.

I, and the CSCA respectfully encourage the committee to address the lack of adequate support staff in all schools by amending 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.

The CSCA is willing to continue working with this committee. Please feel free to contact me or a member of the Connecticut School Counselor Association Board of Directors and use our expertise as a resource so that we can work together to achieve our common purpose of supporting and educating Connecticut’s children.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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“If it is to be, it is up to us.”