Testimony of Jeff Rago  
School Counselor, Hillcrest Middle 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 Jeff Rago and I am a Middle School Counselor in Trumbull and a member of the Connecticut Educators Association and [INCLUDE ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP IF APPLICABLE]. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 956- AN ACT CONCERNING A COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL COUNSELOR PROGRAM.

For the sake of our children, please do what you can to get Senate Bill 956 passed! As a school counselor working in this profession for 25 years, I cannot emphasize to you enough the importance of this bill. Fewer than 25% of Connecticut’s elementary school children have access to school counselors and comprehensive school counseling programming. As a result, these young people enter middle school lacking the requisite skills to navigate middle school life. The data supports that students are dealing with serious mental health issues much earlier in life than in past years and we need to address this problem. Making certified school counselors available to students at a younger age will go a long way towards addressing this safety issue.

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. The American School Counseling Association recommends counseling caseloads of 250:1. Unfortunately, many school districts far exceed this recommended number. As a result, it is virtually impossible for counselors to build a trusting relationship with each student which is essential for students to seek out their counselor when necessary.

I thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jeff Rago  
School Counselor  
Hillcrest Middle School  
Trumbull, CT