Testimony of Kathleen Scully
School Counselor, Cheshire Public Schools

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 Kathleen Scully and I am a School Counselor in Cheshire, CT and a member and Past President of the CT School Counselor Association. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 956- AN ACT CONCERNING A COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL COUNSELOR PROGRAM.

Dear Committee members,

I have been a school counselor for the past 25 years. I’ve worked in all grades, K-12, in both inner-city and suburban schools. I have seen first-hand how Comprehensive School Counseling programs, when implemented with fidelity, contribute to improved student outcomes such as increased attendance and graduation rates, higher test scores, improved attitudes toward learning, and enhanced school climates – and over 30 years of research backs this up. I am especially interested in seeing more of these programs in our elementary schools, where students can be given an early start learning social, emotional, academic, and career awareness skills that will ensure a successful school career, and where early identification and intervention can make the greatest difference in a child’s life. Currently, there are no requirements for school counseling programs to be implemented at any level in Connecticut school districts, and fewer than 25% of Connecticut’s elementary school children currently have access to school counselors and comprehensive school counseling programming.

All students need and have a right to access the services of a school counselor, regardless of their zip code. Unlike school psychologists and school social workers, who focus their attention on students with specific, identified needs, school counselors are trained to provide every student with both counseling and instructional support in the areas of social-emotional well-being, academic skills, and post-secondary readiness. Most of us have come to realize just how important social and emotional skills are to the learning process. Studies now demonstrate that the acquisition of these skills are actually a better indicator of life and career success than academic abilities. When a child learns to take care of his/her emotional well-being, get along with others, make good decisions, self-regulate and self-motivate, maintain healthy relationships, and persevere through difficult challenges, they can truly thrive. And these skills can be taught. But with the numbers of school counselors currently working in our schools, we simply cannot reach all of the students. We need state guidelines with suggested student-to-counselor ratios, so that we can ensure that every child has these learning opportunities. I would therefore 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.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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