Testimony of Curtis Darragh IV  
School Counselor, Westside Middle School Academy, Danbury Public School  
Government Relations and Advocacy Committee Member, CT School Counseling Association  
in support of  
S.B. 312 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL COUNSELORS  
Education Committee - Friday 3/6/2020

Representative Sanchez, Senator McCrory, Representative McCarty, Senator Berthel, and esteemed members of the Education Committee, my name is Curtis Darragh IV and I am a School Counselor at Westside Middle School Academy in the Danbury Public Schools. and an active member on the Government Relations and Advocacy Committee for the Connecticut School Counseling Association. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 312 - AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL COUNSELORS.

This Bill states that a school counselor must devote at least eighty percent of his or her work time during regular school hours and provide direct services to students individually or in groups. This bill is important to me as a school counselor because I will be able to use this opportunity to provide direct services to students who have access to me. By providing these services, I will be able to teach to classrooms a social/emotional curriculum and meet the standards of my career. Students will be able to be taught about various topics in cybersafety, healthy friendships and relationships to name a few and become emotionally stable in social situations. Students will be able to learn and explore different trades and universities that I teach them about in our college and career unit. With the recent education bills that reference school counselors, and what we are responsible for doing during the school day, this bill could help all students on our caseloads have a better and complete access to a school counselor and the services that we provide and educate them with. I currently do most of this work now as a middle school counselor, however at times it has been increasingly difficult to reach each and every single child with a caseload of 350 students.

The American School Counselor Association has a recommended ratio of 250:1 school counselor to student. My caseload used to be at that number. As Danbury continues to be a growing city and a growing school district, my school has expanded and so has my caseload. Next school year, Westside Middle School Academy will have only two school counselors, myself included, with 375 students each. My partner and I try our hardest to build relationships with our students, know their names, their families, and their backgrounds. I used to pride myself with knowing all 250 names, because in this career, every child who gets put on my caseload should feel welcome, respected, safe and have a trusted adult to go to in the building. I should know who they are when they come through my door. 100 students later through the years, that has been difficult for me to maintain. To not only know their names, their families
and life situations, but to reach out and educate each and every one of those students on the school counseling standards that we want every child to get. I am asking that you consider adding to the legislation a maximum ratio of 250:1. No School counselor and no student should ever go through their educational career without knowing each other. My biggest fear in this career is if I ever miss something. I ask myself everyday how one person can be responsible for 350 students and their families when it comes to a student's academics, social/emotional learning and college/career readiness. With adolescent mental health and suicide ideation on the rise in the past couple of years, my fear continues to grow, as I would never want to be in a position of, “I could have, or I should have” Or to even say, “I never knew that student” No student nor school counselor should EVER feel that way.

I would ask that you amend the underlying bill to include the CT 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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