



*School of Education and  
Human Development*

**Testimony of Dr. Dilani Perera**

Chair and Professor of Counselor Education Department of Fairfield University, Connecticut  
*in regards to*

**H.B. No. 5001 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH**

Referred to PUBLIC HEALTH Committee

Public Hearing - February 25, 2022

Senator Daugherty Abrams, Representative Steinberg, Senator Anwar, Senator Kushner, Representative Gilchrest and respected members of the Public Health Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony regarding Proposed H.B. No. 5001 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH. This is a very important step for children and mental health.

I am Dr. Dilani Perera, Chair and Professor of Counselor Education at Fairfield University and the President of the Connecticut Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (CACES), a division of Connecticut Counseling Association (CCA). As the Chair of the Counselor Education Program and a person both trained in school counseling and clinical mental health counseling, I am very qualified to discuss the critical role Counselors can serve in mental health care of children. Specifically, I am testifying about the need **to include Licensed Professional Counselors and Certified School Counselors as “school mental health specialists”** in the language of this bill **and to pay the registration fee and preparation costs of these Counselors.**

Certified School Counselor and Licensed Professional Counselors are both trained at the master’s degree level to become mental health professionals to serve as counselors, leaders, and advocates of children’s mental health.

- Both specialties in counseling complete a 60-credit hour academic program
- Both complete a total minimum of 700 in the field prior to graduating.
- Both specialties take coursework related to mental health needs of children. These include but are not limited to: 1). Counseling Relationships and Skills; 2). Theories of Counseling; 3). Lifespan Human Development; 4). Multicultural Issues in Counseling; 5). Diagnosis and Treatment Across the Lifespan; 6). Introduction to Substance and Process Addictions; 7). Group Work; and 8). Assessment in Counseling; 9). Trauma and Crisis Intervention; 10). Introduction to Marriage and Family Therapy; 11). Child and Adolescent Counseling; 12). Grief and Loss; 13). Eating Disorders

Once graduated, the Professional Counselors sit for a National Exam with significant costs to them, after successful completion of which they are licensed at the first tier as a Licensed Professional Counselor Associate

(LPCA). They continue to work under supervision to earn their license as a Professional Counselor (LPC). The course work above and further training should indicate to you that **Licensed Professional Counselors and Certified School Counselor are well trained professionals to address mental health issues faced by children and should be included as school based mental health specialists along with grants to pay for their licensure exam and preparation.**

I am an advocate for the Profession of Counseling and know that both Licensed Professional Counselors and Certified School Counselors will function in the best interest of the mental health needs of children. **Please amend the language in H.B. No. 5001 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH to include Licensed Professional Counselors and Certified School Counselors in the definition of providers for school mental health specialists and to cover their licensure exam and preparation costs.**

Respectfully,



Dilani Perera, Ph.D., LPC, LADC, NCC, MAC  
Chair and Full Professor of Counselor Education  
Fairfield University, Connecticut