



University of Connecticut  
School of Social Work

January 25, 2013

Dear Members of the Mental Health Committee,

As a faculty member of the University of Connecticut School of Social Work whose research and teaching interests focus on school social work and violence prevention, I applaud Senator Bye's recommendations to staff each Connecticut school with a school social worker. School social workers have a 100+ year history of advocating for vulnerable children in schools. The primary focus of this work has been to identify children who need additional social-emotional support, to provide services if assessment determines the need, to consult with teachers who may need additional support in the classroom and to act as a liaison between families and the school. Although all members of the school inter-disciplinary teams have as a goal, supporting students who experience difficulty in the school environment, social work is uniquely qualified to address multiple systems that may impact the problem.

At this period in history, increased numbers of schools are demonstrating the need for competent school social workers to be part of the problem solving process around the violence that impacts the safety of children and adolescents in schools. The efforts to address this problem and engage young isolated children and adolescents in meaningful connections to peers and the schools should be one priority that evolves from the tragedy of Newtown. School social workers should be part of this problem solving process offering expertise in development of safe and caring school environments.

Please contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Joan Letendre, Ph.D, LCSW  
Associate Professor