



LD 394
Chapter 117 comments

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and respected members of the Education and Cultural Affairs committee,

The following comments are submitted in broad support of the provisional guidelines outlined in Chapter 117 (Rule Regarding Duties of School Counselors and School Social Workers).


We, the undersigned, representing Maine Counseling Association, Maine Mental Health Counselors Association, National Association of Social Workers Maine, Maine School Counselor Association and Maine Psychological Association, are grateful and encouraged that this legislative committee is actively engaged in a process which will help to define, enhance, and protect the critical work performed in Maine's schools by school counselors and school social workers. Both these groups of mental health and education professionals provide distinct and vital services to students and families in our state and have done so for decades against a backdrop of increasing needs, now risen to unprecedented levels in the wake of the global pandemic. Against this urgent backdrop of exploding rates of behavioral and mental health issues and needs, and indeed often in the face of misinformation campaigns and attacks by a vocal minority which have no basis in fact, school counselors and school social workers (alongside other mental health professionals who provide counseling and support in schools) are committed to working together toward the well-being of our students and families.

As this committee finalizes the language in this rule, we ask that the following points/suggestions be considered in order to lessen the possibility that certain portions may be misinterpreted or that they may be more clearly open to further clarification by guidance from the Department of Education. School counselors work with *all* students in a school, not a subset. The first sentence of section 3 may be amended to read "...who help all students succeed..." to reflect this. School counselors are trained and qualified to provide counseling services, and section 3, subsection B, number 6 may be read "Mental and Behavioral Health Counseling and Supports" as well as subsection B, number 2 reading "Academic /College and Career Readiness Guidance and Counseling" to explicitly express this. Lastly, in recognition of the fact that some clinical services are provided in schools by professionals who are not clinically trained social workers (e.g., LCPCs, LMFTs, LADCs, Psychologists), we suggest re-wording a segment of section 2 subsection A "Clinical Practice" to read "providers of these services (e.g., LCSWs, LCPCs, LMFTs, LADCs, Psychologists)..." so as to delineate some of these qualified providers, and revising a line in section 4 to read "Clinically licensed school social workers are among those professionals trained and qualified to provide clinical services. They are highly educated mental health professionals..." in order to make this explicit.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Maine students, families, school counselors, and school social workers. We appreciate the opportunity to share our comments with you, and as always feel free to reach out to members of our organization(s) with any questions regarding the practice of professional counseling in Maine schools and communities.

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