

392 LD 117 TESTIMONY

April 5, 2023

Annalyse Sarvinas – Topsham, Maine

Hello Representative Brennan, Representative Rafferty & Honorable Members of the Education & Cultural Affairs Committee. My name is Annalyse Sarvinas and I'm a resident of Topsham, Maine. I am writing to express my opposition to Chapter 117, "Rules Regarding the Duties of School Counselors and School Social Workers".

First, I'd like to share a little bit about my personal experience with counselors. When I was in high school, I worked closely with my school counselor as years of various trauma's came to a head my junior year. I remember in the beginning of seeking out help, telling my counselor that there was no way she could tell my parents what was going on because they would disown me. My counselor looked at me, and with the best of grace, told me she knew that was a lie. She forced me to look at the real problem, which was not my parents. The real problem was the trauma I had endured while outside my parents care, and the ways I was choosing to deal with it. Because of her ability to tell me the truth, and help me do hard things, I was able to get life changing help with my parents from real doctors outside of school. What could have turned into a lifelong struggle with self-doubt, and broken relationships caused by misplaced blame, became healing and growth. This rule the committee is facing today, paired with a solely affirmative approach, obstructs counselors ability to help students the way my counselor helped me.

I am the majority. The majority of students facing mental health issues just don't want to get in trouble, or don't want to face the shame they feel. Cosigning those feelings does not bring healing and growth, but further damages children who don't have the tools that adults have to navigate.

I'll also address a couple of technical concerns I have regarding this rule that ought not to pass. I believe the original law passed in 1989 had good intentions aimed at protecting children and providing for their needs as best as possible. However, times have changed in the last 25 years. For one, masters degrees are the new bachelors which call into question all laws based upon titles. Secondly, the Ethical Standards adopted by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) in 1998 stated that school counselors must, "refrain from consciously encouraging the counselee's acceptance of values, lifestyles, plans, decisions and beliefs that represent the counselor's personal orientation." In 2021, ASCA ethical standards state, "It is an expectation, not the exception, for school counselors to integrate multiculturalism and social justice

perspectives into their work as advocates and leaders.” This is textbook indoctrination, not counseling or social work.

Chapter 117 should not allow school counselors and school social workers to keep secrets from parents or administer medications. Allowing secrets to be kept from parents or guardian's should be rare and documented. I do not support major substantive rule Chapter 117 and at minimum, request the rule go back to a stage that allows language edits.

Respectfully,

Annalyse Sarvinas

Topsham, Maine