

Jennifer Rowland  
York  
LD 829

As a school counselor in Maine, I am happy to provide testimony in support of LD 829. I work in a district that has always been underserved when it comes to mental health. As trained school counselors, we work hard every day to meet the demands of all student's emotional, social, academic needs as well as provide post-secondary planning. It seems every year, the role of a high school counselor becomes more and more challenging yet we can not get any additional help in our district due to the funding equation. Most recently, my district has decided to add the 8th grade into the high school to save money but because the economy is struggling, we are told we will not be able to add an additional school counselor to the high school. We are three school counselors, one who also holds the role of director, who will now have 960 students split between us. We want to be able to service all of the students in the five grades at our school but with a ratio of over 300:1, that is going to be near impossible. Our case load is increasing 30% next year. If teachers had a thirty percent increase in their work, someone would take notice but school counselors just have to do the best the can because we are told the funding equation in the state of Maine does not allow us the luxury of an additional school counselor to have our student to counselor ratios meet those of the rest of southern Maine. If the funding equation could change and we could have an additional counselor, I believe it would greatly impact our school as a whole as well as each individual student.

Thank you for your time and consideration.