

In- Support LD 2002

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and honorable members of the Education & Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Danielle Duckworth and I am a Sweetser School Based Clinician. I am in strong support of LD 2002 An Act to Provide Incentives to Schools that Contract for Certain Social Work and Family Therapy Services.

One thing that is very apparent is that School Based Clinicians aren't just an option but a necessity.

This generation of school aged children experienced some of their most crucial ages during the COVID19 pandemic. This has not only stunted many of their emotional growth but also created a culture that feeds on instant gratification and high following of social media. Many of these students struggle from suicidality, limited family support, low socioeconomic status, bullying and substance use. It is not to say that this is a new issue, however, it has grown into a more common and concerning issue. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIH) stated, "According to the CDC, suicide is the second-leading cause of death in ages 10–14 and the third-leading cause of death for 15- to 24-year-olds, after accidents and homicide." COVID19 was traumatic for the world which includes the young growing minds who were unable to develop appropriate coping and social skills from home.

Most of my caseload currently or has recently had suicidal ideation that has stemmed from bullying or other peer relationship and behavioral issues that might have otherwise been avoided if given more support. School Based Clinicians provide a safe, confidential, and supportive environment for a generation that more often than not does not have that in their immediate family. Many of these children come from families who also struggle with their own mental health, addiction or other issues that have not been addressed or they have lost their immediate families to and are being raised by other family or adopted families.

School Based Clinicians are a necessity however, is not a highly sought-after role due to the provided rates that can't vie with more competitive corporate or private practice rates. If School Based services were given more aid, I'm sure we would see the profession grow along with an increase in positive mental health for our future. More resources for this role will provide support for our future who so desperately needs to heal.

Additionally, it can be difficult for families, students and clinicians to navigate between educational institutions and outside providers. If schools are given an appropriate incentive for inviting providers into their schools, it would allow a greater number of children to be served, a common ground for providers and families to congregate at as well as a more supportive environment for students while in school. Many of my students and their families have expressed appreciation and gratitude for my office being within the school and being able to meet during school hours. If not, many of them would not be able to access services due to transportation or other logistical issues. Another benefit has been accessing different domains in a student's life including academia and home to better understand their psyche. It enables a more in-depth understanding of our clients and their worlds, which is much more detailed than an general outpatient office setting.

Again, this resource is incredible and gives hope to the young minds of the future. Many schools would benefit from this and would aid with detrimental staffing shortages. If we are able to incentivize this resource while creating coping skills, processing trauma and ending generational unhealthy behaviors, we are providing for our future. I urge this committee to support LD 2002. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Danielle Duckworth
School-Based Clinician