

Testimony of

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Montville Educator

Before the

Public Health Committee & Committee on Children

Re:

HB 5001 - AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

February 25, 2022

Good morning members of the Public Health Committee and Committee on Children. Thank you for holding this public hearing to discuss mental health supports for our students. I support the many provisions in HB 5001 and SB 2 that address the student mental health crisis in our schools, especially those relating to staffing support and ensuring classroom teachers have greater input in resources available to students in crisis.

The proposed legislation enhances the recruitment and staffing of social workers but, for the sake of our students, I want to ensure that these provisions will also apply to school counselors, psychologists, special educators, and other certified specialists.

What You Don't See, but as an educator, I see every day, is the impact that trauma has on my students and my school.

I work in a distressed district and teach at both Montville High School and Palmer Academy (our alternative high school). Prior to Covid, we had several students with unaddressed social emotional needs. The pandemic has exacerbated these conditions. Students in our school struggle with mental health issues ranging from depression to addiction. These problems greatly affect their ability to be fully present in class and often attend school at all. We desperately need more social workers in school to help our students. Our school district is underfunded as it is and finding and paying social workers is a huge challenge. Our ability as teachers is directly affected by the large numbers of students in need of mental health support. What you might not be aware of, but is a real problem is that it is difficult to teach the students who aren't struggling because of the constant need to direct my attention to the students who are struggling. We need you, our elected officials, to stand up for our students. Get them the help they need now, while we still have contact with them. This is a health and human rights issue and you need to protect our students.

Thank you for addressing these critical issues impacting our students, our educators, and our school communities.