

Testimony of

Laura Deponte

East Haven 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.

My students look lost, unmotivated and they don't want to be in school. It is a depressing time for many of my students and when they arrive I am grateful to see their face. I start each day with a smile but many come looking exhausted and our not getting a goodnight sleep. These high school students need attention and less academics during the pandemics. We do not know their home life and I pray everyday for their mental well being. I am also experiencing fatigue and depression and would benefit from health supports.

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