Testimony of Virginia A. DeLong  
School Counselor, Lebanon Middle School  
Government Relations & Advocacy Chairman  
Connecticut School Counselor Association  
in regards to  
S.B. 312 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL COUNSELORS  
Education Committee Hearing - March 6, 2020

Representative Sanchez, Senator McCrory, Representative McCarty, Senator Berthel, and respected members of the Education Committee, my name is Virginia DeLong and I am a school counselor and Chairman of the Government Relations and Advocacy Committee for the CT School Counselor Association. I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in support of raised Senate Bill 312- AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL COUNSELORS on behalf of the Connecticut School Counselor Association and the 1200+ school counselors across the state.

Over the last twenty years, the role of the counselor has changed, moving away from the traditional guidance counselor model, and moving to a more comprehensive counseling model that serves all students. We would like legislation that accurately reflects these changes and supports the work of the school counselor.

**Spending 80% of Time on School Counseling Services**

In order to provide preventative, comprehensive school counseling services to all students within our Connecticut schools, school counselors should be spending at least 80% of their time on direct counseling services. **This would include:**

- Delivering a developmentally appropriate school counseling curriculum in the classroom to all students
- Providing short term counseling services through small group, individual and crisis counseling
- Working on individual student planning (such as components of student success plans)
- Collaborating with teachers, administrators, parents/families; consulting with outside agencies
- Working on tasks that directly benefit students (i.e. letters of recommendation, data collection & analysis of student data, delivering school counseling parent programming)
- Other duties/responsibilities that are in alignment with the CT School Counselor Framework

**It would not include:**

- Testing coordinating or proctoring
- Administrative duties, clerical work, or other duties that take away from school counseling duties
- Long-term therapeutic counseling
- Other duties/responsibilities that are not in alignment with the CT School Counselor Framework

We ask that the current language in the bill be amended to say **“a school counselor devotes at least eighty percent of his or her work time during regular school hours to providing school counseling services.”** We would like **“directly to individual or groups of students”** to be removed as school counseling services encompass much more than directly working with students face to face as evidenced above.

**The Need for Lower Counselor-to-Student Ratios - An Equity Issue**

The current school counselor-to-student ratio in Connecticut is 1:441. Our lowest performing schools in Connecticut have some of the worst ratios, compared to our highest performing schools:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High performing schools</th>
<th>Low performing schools</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School Level = 1:182</td>
<td>Middle School Level = 1:211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low School Level = 1:285</td>
<td>Middle School Level = 1:891</td>
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The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommends a school counselor-to-student ratio of 1:250. We support that ratio as a maximum for school counselors in Connecticut. Research has shown that even 250 may be
too high for some districts depending on the needs of the district. All students should have access to a school counselor and currently they do not. While allowing counselors to spend 80% of their time on school counseling services is incredibly helpful to closing the access gap, it simply is not enough. Our counselors need to have manageable ratios to provide equitable service to our students across the state.

**Elementary School Counselors**

In Connecticut only 25% of our elementary schools have school counselors and many of those school counselors are split between schools. In order for students to receive true preventative, comprehensive school counseling services in the academic, career and social emotional domains, Connecticut needs to pass legislation that would add school counselors in all of our schools across Connecticut. All of our elementary schools should have school counselors, including enough counselors in our PK-8 schools so that elementary and middle school students are receiving school counseling services.

The landscape of education has changed dramatically over the last 10 years, and Connecticut needs to start making drastic changes to keep up. Our students’ social emotional/mental health needs have increased exponentially and we need more support staff like school counselors in our school to keep up with these needs.

The Connecticut School Counselor Association is respectfully asking that the Education Committee amend the current language as stated above and also consider amending the legislation to include the addition of elementary school counselors in all of our schools and a maximum school counselor-to-student ratio of 1:250.

Thank you for all the work that you do for the children of Connecticut and for your consideration of our requests. Should you have any questions, I would be happy to answer them.

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