

House Education Committee

Pat D. Heinert

Subject: Testimony Regarding House Bill 1490

Dear Mr. Pat Heinert and Members of the House Education Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB 1490, which would place unnecessary and potentially harmful restrictions on school counselors' ability to provide vital services to students. While I understand that the bill aims to ensure safety and effectiveness, I do not believe this will improve student outcomes.

This bill mandates that licensed school counselors must undergo a psychological evaluation by a licensed psychologist before being allowed to provide services to students without another faculty member present. While the intent may be to ensure that counselors are mentally fit to perform their duties, this requirement is both excessive and impractical. It could lead to delays in providing services, ultimately harming students who rely on timely access to mental health support. School counselors are already highly trained professionals who hold advanced degrees and certifications to work with students. We are trained to follow a code of ethics that guides all of our decision making and work with our students.

Counselors are often the first line of defense for students facing emotional, social, and psychological challenges. By suggesting that they must undergo regular evaluations to confirm their fitness to work with students, the bill could inadvertently undermine their professional credibility and potentially discourage qualified individuals from entering or staying in the counseling profession.

Most importantly, this bill fails to consider the impact on students. If school counselors are required to have another faculty member (who is not necessarily a trained mental health professional) present during counseling sessions unless they can provide the necessary documentation of psychological fitness, it could disrupt the trusting and confidential relationship that students need with their counselors.

In conclusion, while the safety and well-being of students should always be a top priority, HB 1490 is not the right solution. The bill introduces unnecessary hurdles for school counselors, creates potential delays in providing services to students, and could harm the very trust and support that is essential in the counselor-student relationship. I urge the committee to reconsider this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Courtney Quist, M.Ed

High School Counselor