

To: Honorable Politicians (Senators, House Committee Members, and Others)

From: Anonymous

Re: SB 2340

Good Morning:

As a school counselor, I am in opposition to SB 2340. I know that doesn't mean anything to anyone—except for those of us who actually work as school counselors, but I wish not to digress.

During my thirty (30) plus years as a teacher and counselor, I have worked on the elementary, middle, and high school levels. I currently work as a high school guidance counselor. Honestly, I lasted only two (2) years as an elementary school counselor because it was so different from my passion of working with the high school population.

Some of the trends that I have seen over the course of my thirty plus years is that politicians believe that there is a person named *Anyone* who can do our jobs. *Anyone* can be a teacher, *Anyone* can be a school counselor, *Anyone* can be a school principal. Pray tell, who is *Anyone*? Politicians may answer that with: *Anyone* is a person who has a passion for sharing their knowledge and skills with the next generation. Well, people, that is not good enough!

*Anyone* cannot and should not be allowed to take shortcuts to become an educator in any capacity. *Anyone* needs to take a myriad of teacher preparation courses in pedagogy, methodology, classroom management, child psychology, differential learning styles, teacher etiquette and professionalism, and the list goes on and on.

Now, in terms of school counseling, I believe that one of the gravest mistakes was made in the 1990s when school counselors no longer had to be classroom teachers prior to working as a school counselor. (Unfortunately, that was the craziness from my home state, but I digress.) School counselors who have never taught are at a grave disadvantage in many ways. When teachers seek advice or suggestions from the school counselor about classroom management, for example, the counselor who has classroom experience is able to help more

effectively than one who does not have any classroom experience. There are several issues that I could cite, but again, I do not wish to digress.

Nevertheless, I mentioned the above example to state this: A mental health professional coming into the high school as a “school counselor” will be at an even greater disadvantage. This person will not be effective in helping navigate the nuances of a student’s big picture educational goals. The mental health professional will not be able to see the big picture in the average student who is not struggling mentally or emotionally. Believe it or not, there are far more students who are not in need of deep therapeutic help, than those that are in need of serious interventions. The mental health professional will not be able to address the needs and concerns of the general population, much like it is difficult for school counselors to spend an infinite amount of time working with one student who is having a crisis.

In my school building, we are fortunate to have a full-time social worker who addresses the needs of those students, while the counselors address the needs of the academic impacts of all students. If counselors were bogged down with the social-emotional and deep therapeutic needs of students, we would not be able to effectively address our students, parents, and administrators about the academic lives of the students in our caseloads.

All of that was said to address this: Yes, we do need mental health professionals, social workers, and school counselors in all schools, but with the understanding that they have totally different job descriptions, duties and responsibilities. They should also be under separate contracts. One should not be a substitute or in lieu of the other, except under very short-term provisions and exceptions.

It really never ceases to amaze me how politicians, who last stepped into a classroom or school building, except for the occasional photo opportunity, get to dictate the lives of millions of students over the course of time. Politicians have an awesome task and responsibility and must get this correct. SB 2340 should not be passed, but if it is passed, at least...well, I can’t really think of anything good from the school counselors’ side, but because those who are in favor of, and allow this bill to pass, I am sure that you know why this is good. Again, pray tell: How is this SB 2340 supposed to be effective and good for the lives of our students?

