

Chairman Heinert, Vice Chairman Schreiber-Beck, and Members of the House Education Committee:

Thank you for reading this testimony regarding SB 2340, relating to required school counselors. I would recommend a vote of DO NOT PASS, or at least an amendment to the wording of the bill.

I work as a professional school counselor in a large urban high school. Twenty years ago, when I was working on my master's degree in school counseling, I studied alongside peers who were working on their master's in clinical counseling. While we had multiple courses together, we also had courses apart (for example, some of the courses for the school counselor track included teacher education and professional k-12 school counseling courses). The reason for that is because the profession of a school counselor is vastly different than the profession of a clinical counselor.

The size of the student body that school counselors work with is much higher than an average case load amount in a clinical setting. School counselors are trained in solution-focused brief counseling because when we have over 300 students whom we are responsible for there is not enough time in the day to provide 50-minute therapy sessions to each of them. We provide the counseling services necessary to get a student through the school day and refer out or utilize school-based mental health services for those situations where students need continued and more intensive mental health services.

Professional school counselors follow the American School Counseling Association framework to provide services to the entire student body via classroom lessons, group/individual work, and coordination with family members and other professional staff in the school to support student success. Many of these aspects of the school counseling profession are unknown to clinical counselors in the community.

I recently discussed this bill with a friend of mine who works as an addiction counselor and when I explained what my year as a professional school counselor is like, she stated she would not be prepared to accept a position within a school after knowing everything that a school counselor does. School counselors do so much more than counseling.

Work force shortages are in multiple areas of education and filling these spaces with partially trained or non-specialized personnel could result in consequences that could inhibit the betterment of our student body.

Professional school counselors hold the positions that they do because of the lengthy education and training involved. We work with our students following the American School Counseling Association guidelines to ensure that all students are served in the areas of social/emotional, academic, and career supports. This bill has the possibility to greatly disrupt the educational setting and reduce the effectiveness of a comprehensive school counseling program.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony.

Respectfully,

Lindsey Guidinger
Professional School Counselor