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Testimony of
Ray Rossomando

Before the Education Committee

Re: SB 956 AAC A Comprehensive School Counselor Program

March 6, 2019

Good afternoon Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Ray Rossomando, and I serve as the Director of Policy, Research, and Government Relations for the Connecticut Education Association (CEA), an organization representing active and retired teachers from over 150 school districts across Connecticut.

CEA supports SB 956.

CEA members are increasingly concerned about the availability of services for all students, especially those who exhibit the greatest need.

A growing concern is the availability of social-emotional support for children, including those in the earliest grades, who have experienced trauma or other challenges that impact their ability to learn and develop on pace with their peers.

Demand for services from school counselors, who are instrumental in children's educational development throughout their school years, is outpacing supply. In fact, a recent ACLU publication shows the average student-to-counselor ratio in Connecticut to be a staggering 326:1. This far exceeds the 250:1 ratio recommended by the American School Counselor Association.

At the same time, 38,906 Connecticut students currently attend a school that has a security guard but no counselor.^[1] Certainly, providing counselors in all schools should be a priority. Ensuring equitable access to counselors and school support staff is a critical ingredient in serving all children well.

This bill would, in addition, help address the appropriate roles of counselors. Our members report concerns that counselors are increasingly being diverted from counseling responsibilities to cover for other school needs unrelated to counseling. At a time when student-to-counselor ratios are higher than they should be, diverting counselors to unrelated duties further diminishes their ability to help all children succeed. Developing guidelines for use by districts could help focus counselors' expertise and services on the students who need them the most.

Thank you.

^[1] <https://www.aclu.org/issues/juvenile-justice/school-prison-pipeline/cops-and-no-counselors>