

Testimony of

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Naugatuck Educator

Before the

Public Health Committee & Committee on Children

Re:

HB 5001 - AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

February 25, 2022

Good morning members of the Public Health Committee and Committee on Children.

Thank you for holding this public hearing to discuss mental health supports for our students. I support the many provisions in HB 5001 and SB 2 that address the student mental health crisis in our schools, especially those relating to staffing support and ensuring classroom teachers have greater input in resources available to students in crisis.

The proposed legislation enhances the recruitment and staffing of social workers but, for the sake of our students, I want to ensure that these provisions will also apply to school counselors, psychologists, special educators, and other certified specialists.

What You Don't See, but as an educator, I see every day, not only is the impact that trauma on my students and my school but In the case of my personal story, you will see the impact that trauma has had on myself and my colleagues.

Student behavior at my school has been beyond disruptive, it has been violent. Not only have I seen students punch one another, shove one another into school buses, push one another down stairs, and verbally threaten one another, I have seen teachers verbally threatened and injured by students as a result of their violent behaviors.

I have been assaulted by students three times. In early 2020, prior to the pandemic disruptions, I had a seventh grade student take a running jump onto my back from a riser. This caused me to tear the meniscus in my knee and required surgery. In November 2021, I had a seventh or eighth grade student run into my back in the hallway at full speed, causing me to have back and neck spinal pain, bulging discs, and I have been on medical leave since then while I have been trying to heal. I am still unsure whether this back and neck injury will require surgery or cause permanent damage yet. There was also an incident where I almost fell down stairs as a result of violent student behavior in the stairwell, as one student pushed another down the stairs, causing the student to bump into me before falling to the landing. I am thankful that I did not fall in this instance and that the student who fell stated he was unharmed. I am aware that there have been several other teachers in my building who have been injured by students this school year alone, including one with torn ligaments and another who was punched in the face by a middle school student.

In each of these instances, student behavior has had lasting damage to educators both physically and emotionally. In most instances mentioned above, there were little or no consequences for the students

who caused the injuries to teachers or other students. There are just too many negative and violent behaviors for administrative staff to handle it all, and it is taking a toll on the school climate overall.

Our public school students need many more resources than they have at this time. Safety measures need to be put in place to keep our children safe and to ensure the safety of our faculty and staff as well. I see the violence spiraling, and changes need to be made immediately, before more children and adults are hurt, or worse, killed as a result of this violence. Please make every effort to keep our schools safe!

Thank you for addressing these critical issues impacting our students, our educators, and our school communities.