

*Testimony of*

**Anne Varrone-Lederle**

Wallingford 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, is the impact that trauma has on my students and my school.

I see students who are suffering from the stress of peer and societal pressures. Just recently, a student told me, along with a small group of friends during study hall that she had passed out and hit her head. She was going for blood work. A few days later, she announced to us that she had anemia. A day later, her parents emailed the school counselor to insist that an adult sit with their daughter during lunch or take her some place quiet where she could eat and be watched. Why? Because this student had been diagnosed with Anorexia. The parents were worried sick about it. When asked what else there was in place for their daughter, they told the school counselor that there was a two month waiting list to get her into a program for eating disorders. Two months! Yes, of course, our counselor found a lunch group with our social worker and other places for this student to eat her lunch, but the family is waiting for two months to get their child more appropriate counseling. In an era when we are talking about Covid trauma, let's not forget that our students are still suffering daily from things that may not sound so trendy and buzz word like. We need resources at our schools and other institutions to help all of our families, not only those who have suffered from our most recent events. Thanks.

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