

*Testimony of*

**Kristina Lee**

Mansfield 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 am a school counselor which means I work with ALL students in the grade levels I work with. I have seen an increase in students with crisis situations, meaning I drop what I was doing or had planned to support the student. 15% of my time this year has been spent dealing with crisis. While I agree schools need more staff trained to support mental health needs, school counselors have more training around counseling and working with all students. Though myself to student ratio is reasonable on paper, when I am counseling a student in crisis, the rest of my caseload does not have me available to them.

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