

Chairman Smith, Vice Chairman Schuring, Ranking Member Driehaus, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the provisions of HB 64 affecting school counselors.

I am Sarah Collins, a practicing school counselor at a comprehensive high school, and the current president of the Ohio School Counselor Association (OSCA). I am pleased to be here today on behalf of over 1600 OSCA members to support the school counselor provisions in HB 64.

School counselors are licensed, master's level, educational leaders who promote and advocate for the academic success and social/emotional development of all students in grades preK-12. Additionally, through career counseling and college planning, school counselors help students set goals and navigate the various post-secondary pathways to be productive citizens in the workforce and in life.

The provisions in HB 64 calling for the creation of school counseling standards that align with the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model and professional development for school districts will ensure school counselors are utilized most appropriately. Currently, there is no statewide approved evaluation tool for school counselors nor standards for their roles within the school building. This leads to many school counselors being used in a manner that is outside of their scope of practice. Students are best served by a school counselor who is able to provide proactive and systemic services instead of monitoring lunch duty or proctoring standardized tests.

Much is known about the effects of class size and teacher quality on achievement, but few studies have examined how to improve education by utilizing non-instructional resources. However, a 2011 study by two economists concluded that a school counselor has the same impact on overall achievement as increasing the quality of every teacher in the school by nearly one-third of a standard deviation, and is twice as effective as reducing class size by hiring an additional teacher (Carrell & Hoekstra, 2011).

The lack of standards and an appropriate role-specific evaluation has set up a disparity in the school counseling services the children in Ohio are receiving. One student may have access to a school counselor who is responsible for 2000 students in multiple buildings while being expected to monitor the lunch room and cover classes when a teacher is absent. Another student may be blessed with a school counselor who is responsible for 250 students (the recommendation from ASCA) and who provides a dynamic program that consists of large group activities, targeted small group meetings and individual sessions to ensure students are being exposed to a curriculum that fully supports the development of the whole child.

Statewide standards and an evaluation system are great first steps in bringing more equity and improving the quality of services Ohio's students receive, but in isolation these are not enough. OSCA fully supports the language in HB 64 that calls for the appropriation of professional development for those who will be evaluating school counselors. When OTES was introduced, evaluators were required to complete lengthy trainings to learn how to fairly assess a teacher's skill even though most have previously been teachers. The majority of administrators who will be tasked with completing the evaluation of school counselors have

never been a school counselor themselves. They are not fully aware of what exactly a school counselor could and should be doing. Providing professional development and support for evaluators using the Ohio school counselor standards and evaluation system is a key part in the process.

School counselors are uniquely qualified to bring Ohio's students' academic, career, and social/emotional world together and to help those students move toward a successful future. OSCA stands ready to work collaboratively as the initiatives in HB 64 move forward because every student in Ohio deserves a great school counselor.

Reference:

Carrell, S.E., & Hoekstra, M. (2011). Are school counselors a cost-effective education input. *Economics Letters* 125. Retrieved from:
http://www.econ.ucdavis.edu/faculty/scarrell/counselors_input.pdf