



Dr. Colette T. Dollarhide and Dr. Amy E. Williams

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Chair Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson and members of the House Primary & Secondary Education Committee, thank you for allowing us the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 333.

We are writing on behalf of the Ohio Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (OACES). I (CTD) represent the Counselor Educator faculty in Ohio who educate future professional school counselors (not “guidance” counselors). I am currently a professor in Counselor Education at the Ohio State University, where our program is ranked #1 in the country by US News and World Report, and I have researched and trained school counselors for the past 28 years. I (AEW) am the current OACES President, an assistant professor in the Counseling Program at Youngstown State University, and an active professional counselor currently working with individuals, couples, and families at Navigate Counseling and Consulting in Cuyahoga Falls, OH. In addition, I am also a former elementary school teacher who understands the many challenges faced by students and families of school-aged youth and the systemic barriers that may impact a school’s ability to support the socio-emotional and developmental needs of students within the school setting. Both as members of OACES and as professional counselor educators, we ask you to support House Bill 333 which will create a universal job description for professional school counselors.

Currently, districts in Ohio utilize school counselors in a variety of ways, some of which include primary duties that do not utilize the graduate education and expertise of school counselors. The use of professional school counselors for administrative duties such as discipline, state test administration, scheduling, or tutoring are examples of ways school counselors are forced to function in ways that waste their training, undermine their expertise, and decrease the benefits they can provide to their students. School counselors are master’s level professionals who can address the whole child, who are trained to develop a comprehensive school counseling program that addresses academic, career, and social and emotional needs of students. The development of a universal Ohio school counselor job description will give school counselors a tool to advocate for the appropriate use of their skills, which in turn, will enable school counselors to use those skills and education to benefit the children in the State of Ohio. The skills of professional school counselors are critical in a time where school violence, childhood trauma, and the opioid epidemic all erode the ability of students to be successful at school and in life.

School counselors are trained to provide whole child/whole school interventions to enhance positive behavioral interventions and supports (known as PBIS), college and career readiness, social and emotional learning (SEL) standards, and other initiatives emphasized by the Ohio Department of Education. Additionally, the requirement to develop a universal job description that aligns with the OSCES, the school counselor standards and evaluation process, would benefit school counselors, administrators, and other school personnel due to increased role clarity.

Developing a universal job description will allow counselor educators to focus the training of their students on professionally viable activities, rather than on how to navigate non-professional duties that a school district may require a counselor to perform. Being able to focus on learning how to meet students’ academic, career, and social and emotional needs will strengthen those skills in a future school counselor. With a universal job description, faculty can establish benchmarks for ensuring school counseling master’s students graduate with a focus on evidence-based practices that are in line with their future job description.

As an organization, OACES stands in solidarity with the Ohio School Counselor Association and requests you also take that position. Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

Sincerely,

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