**Advocacy Messaging Examples for SCA Leaders**

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| **Topic** | **Message** |
| Support legislation to improve school counselor to student ratio (Support the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Act) | With adequately staffed schools, students would have access to the full complement of services delivered through a comprehensive school counseling program. School counselors are integral in providing a safe and supportive school environment and assist students with social/emotional and academic development and college and career readiness. Access to school counseling services provide students with prevention and early intervention services. |
| Budget approval: Support new proposed funding for school counselors | As a constituent, I urge you to support Governor Northam's budget, specifically the $36 million of new money devoted to funding additional school counselors to lower Virginia's student-to-counselor ratio to 1:250.  Additionally, per the House Select Committee on School Safety's recommendation, I strongly encourage you to support a bill this legislative session clearly stating that a minimum of 80% of a school counselor's time be devoted to the delivery of direct counseling services to students (per national best practice standards). |
| Oppose bill that includes school counselors in medicaid funding practices | SB 372 would change the licensing body for school counselors from the Department of Education to the Clinical Board for Marriage and Family Therapists and Clinical Professional Counselors. This could fundamentally shift the role of the school counselor in Nevada.  School counselors are educators who are trained in social/emotional development, academic and college and career readiness. School counselors serve all students, not just students with disabilities or students that qualify for other federal programs (e.g., Medicaid or IDEA). School counselors deliver services to all students in classroom settings on topics such as social skills, anti-bullying/harassment, self-advocacy, and organizational skills. These skills benefit all students and are delivered to ALL students and therefore would not qualify under the strict regulations and requirements of very narrowly-focused federal programs meant to reimburse for services delivered to specific populations of students. Furthermore, school counselors are absolutely critical in a student's career development and the college admissions process. These services for the majority of students would NOT qualify as special education services or other health services as outlined in Medicaid-eligible or IEP-mandated services. |
| Include school counselors in a master teacher program | The Executive Budget provides $2 million to launch new program cohorts, which are aimed at supporting high-performing teachers and school counselors. This funding will prioritize teachers of color, career and technical education (CTE) teachers, and school counselors. Each master teacher is awarded $15,000 per year for four years ($60,000 total). Those selected as master teachers will pledge to engage in peer mentoring, participate in and lead professional development activities, work closely with pre-service and early career teachers to foster a supportive environment, and ensure the most innovative teaching practices are shared across all grades and regions.  We urge you to include school counselors in this much-needed program in the state budget to ensure students have access to high-quality counseling services. |
| Remove language from a bill that inaccurately reflects the role of the school counselor | The Oklahoma School Counselor Association opposes SB 615 and urges legislators to remove the language "meeting with a school counselor" that is listed as part of curriculum and materials for sex education. As written, the bill would prevent school counselors from serving all students equitably. School counselors meet with students to support their academic, career and social/emotional developmental needs. The bill does not reflect the role accurately and creates a barrier to students having access to their school counselor. |
| Addressing gun violence | All students need a safe, violence-free environment for learning. The massacre of 19 students and 2 teachers at Robb Elementary School in Ulvade Texas, adds to the list of 27 school shootings already in 2022 that have injured or killed students and staff. Gun violence is the leading cause of premature death in the United States. ASCA demands policymakers to take necessary preventive action by enacting policy to protect our nation's children. Specifically:  Support a ban on military-style weapons, high-capacity ammunition clips and products that modify semi-automatic firearms to enable them to function like automatic firearms  Support closing loopholes for gun purchases at gun shows and online  Support requirements for thorough background checks for all gun purchases and strengthen background check criteria to prevent purchases by high-risk individuals  Oppose any efforts to arm educators (including teachers, school counselors and administrators)  While there isn't any one thing that will halt these killings, something can be done to lessen the chance. These tragedies are preventable, but only if you act. |
| Informing the role of the school counselor | School counselors are educators specifically trained and licensed to improve student success for all students by implementing a comprehensive school counseling program. Through our programs, school counselors help all students:  Apply academic achievement strategies  Manage emotions and apply interpersonal skills  Plan for postsecondary options (higher education, military, work force)  Some of our duties include:  \*Individual student academic planning and goal setting  \*School counseling classroom lessons based on NCDPI Guidance Essential Standards and ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success  \*Short-term counseling to students  \*Referrals for long-term support  \*Collaboration with families/teachers/ administrators/ community for student success  \*Advocacy for students at individual education plan meetings and other student-focused meetings  \*Data analysis to identify student issues, needs and challenges  \*Acting as a systems change agent to improve equity and access, achievement and opportunities for all students  All of our work is intended to safeguard the well-being of our students. If you would like to speak further about this or have any questions, feel free to contact me. Thank you for your continued support of students in North Carolina. |
| Support for establishing and acknowledging school counselor certification, professional development and a school counselor liaison at SBE | As a constituent of your district, I am respectfully asking for your support of S-2323/A-1516 which establishes certain program requirements for school counselor certification; outlines the role and duties of school counselors; requires professional development focused on the role of the school counselor, and establishes a position of School Counselor Liaison in the Department of Education.  This bill will define the role of the school counselor with appropriate duties, require college and university school counseling programs to incorporate the American School Counselor Association's National Model or State-approved model, allow for counselors to receive job-specific professional development, and direct the Commissioner of Education to appoint a State School Counselor Liaison.  New Jersey's students deserve the full complement of services delivered through a comprehensive school counseling program. School counselors are integral in providing a safe and supportive school environment, assisting students with social/emotional and academic development, and college and career readiness. Access to school counseling services provides students with prevention and early intervention services. Now, more than ever, an emphasis must be placed on the use of social-emotional learning, as well as multi-tiered systems of support that address the needs of our students. The proposed legislation seeks to make school counselors' primary responsibilities to meet the mental, behavioral, and career readiness needs of students.  Thank you for your support. |
| Include school counselors in a statewide bonus program | Thank you for including in the 2023 Fiscal Year Budget, the NYS Mental Health and Hygiene Worker Bonus (HWB) Program. Located within Part ZZ of Chapter 56 of the Laws of 2022, the HWB provision allows for the payment of bonuses to "recruit, retain, and reward health care and mental hygiene workers" meeting specified eligibility requirements. Bonus amounts will be commensurate with the number of hours worked by eligible workers covered by the HWB Program during designated vesting periods for up to a total of $3,000 per covered worker. As is stated on the program website, New York's essential front line health care and mental hygiene workers have seen us through a once-in-a-century public health crisis and turned our state into a model for battling and beating COVID-19.  Essential workers in the mental hygiene field include School Counselors. Certified school counselors were front line workers during the COVID-19 period and continue to be essential to schools, students and families as we continue to recover from that unique period. School counselors have always been a pivotal member of the collective care team which includes school nurses, school psychologists, and school social workers as the team addresses the mental health needs of our school communities.  Unfortunately, the NYS Mental Health and Hygiene Worker Bonus (HWB) Program does not include the title of School Counselor as an eligible title on the program website. School psychologists and school social workers are included as "Master Level" specialists, but school counselors are not included on the list or in guidance from the Department of Health unless they are also licensed under another eligible title as is stated in the FAQ info below: This is an oversight that must be rectified.  Q. Are guidance counselors eligible for the bonus?  A. Guidance Counselor as listed in the Consolidated Fiscal Report (CFR) is not an eligible title. Guidance counselors may be eligible for the bonus if they are working in the capacity of another title on the list of eligible titles as defined in the CFR during the applicable vesting period, so long as they meet all other eligibility criteria including appropriate licensure. Employers should select the applicable title from the list of eligible titles for employees working in this capacity.  This misstatement of job titles encourages further confusion because school counselors have been certified by NYSED as School Counselors since the 1970's . Guidance counselor is a 'legacy' title much like 'gym teacher' or 'shop teacher' and not an actual certification or license.  NYSED Regulations (Part 100.2 (j) require all schools to have comprehensive school counseling programs which employ certified school counselors providing the mental health services as follows in the regulation:  100.2(j)(2)(i)(d) Other direct student services which may include, but need not be limited to, responsive services, crisis response, group counseling, individual counseling, appraisal, assessment and advisement, for the purpose of enabling students to benefit from the curriculum, assisting students to develop and implement postsecondary education and career plans, assisting students who exhibit attendance, academic, behavioral or adjustment concerns and encouraging parental involvement.  To summarize, school counselors should be designated as eligible for receipt of the Health Care Workers Bonus since the mental health services that we provided (or provide in future time periods) are essentially the same as school based providers that have been deemed eligible for the Health Care Workers Bonus. These services provided by school counselors are required by NYSED regulations governing comprehensive school counseling programs.  We ask that you request the Department of Health communicate with school districts immediately that certified school counselors are eligible for the program and that they should be included in school district claims submissions. |
| Amend proposed bill mandating school counselors | According to the current language of SB 2340, schools will be required to attempt to fill the 300:1 school counselor mandate with licensed & credentialed school counselors. However, if unable to find and hire a school counselor, schools would be able to fill open positions by contracting in for mental health services. Allowing this puts our state at risk of reducing counseling support for the majority of students in our state.  School counselors provide a comprehensive approach to meet the needs of ALL students in their schools. School Counselors cover academic, personal/social and career domains to ensure a whole child approach to student growth and development. School Counselors reach ALL students through tier 1 (provided to all students) support when they deliver classroom lessons to ALL students and work to identify students in need of additional support and connect them to outside counseling services and resources.  Mental health counselors and social workers are integral to supporting student needs on the tier 3 (intensive needs) level. However, if they are hired to cover the School Counseling mandate of 300:1, the majority of students in those schools will not have access to counseling support unless they have intensive needs. Additionally, preventative instruction will be lost, and college and career readiness will suffer.  North Dakota School Counselors understand the intent of this bill to help meet student needs until school counselors can be trained and hired for open positions. However, we ask you to consider amending the bill so the mandate would take effect in Fall of 2024 to allow more time for school counselors to be trained and hired, or to allow school counseling interns or other mental health professionals to temporarily fill the void for schools on a year-to-year basis while schools continue working to recruit and hire the required school counselors for their districts. At a time when student mental health is in crisis, we need to continue working to provide both school counseling and mental health services to our students to help meet the unique needs of EVERY North Dakota student. |
| Oppose bill that would allow noncertified persons to be hired as school counselors | As written, schools will be required to attempt to fill the 300:1 mandate with school counselors. However, if unable to find and hire a school counselor, schools would be able to fill open positions by contracting in for mental health services. This puts our students at risk of not having access to comprehensive student support provided by school counseling programs. This bill also ignores the significance of the role of the school counselor in supporting student mental health needs. With the current mental health crisis among our youth, school counselors provide immediate and necessary interventions to promote well-being. Passing this bill would negatively impact students in the following ways:  \*Students will not receive comprehensive student support services provided by school counselors and school counseling programs.  \*Students will be missing out on vital college and career readiness programming, which will have negative ramifications for our ND Workforce.  \*The academic supports provided to students through the school counseling program will not be available to help build academic skills which result in better student  outcomes.  \*Students will not receive important social emotional training provided by the school counseling curriculum.  \*School wide prevention activities will be absent.  \*The majority of ND students will not have access to counseling services as the majority do not need extensive intervention provided by mental health professionals.  View this document to learn more about how the role of school counselors compare with other mental health professionals mentioned in this bill:  https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cMY0UNdzgSatYZiFd0QtP3SyaFm9cjv2/view  We are asking you to oppose SB 2340 for the best possible outcomes for all North Dakota students. |
| Oppose bill that would allow districts to hire non school counseling certified persons to be school counselors | The Lone Star State School Counselor Association urges you to vote no to SB 763. If passed, this bill would allow school districts to hire chaplains to fill the role of the school counselor. School counselors are uniquely qualified and solely eligible to meet the requirements of designing and implementing school counseling programs. They deliver direct and indirect services that support academic, career and social/emotional development and positively affect achievement for all students. Chaplains who do not possess the academic and professional credentials of a school counselor, even with the best intention, may provide inappropriate responses or interventions to students that could jeopardize students’ development and well-being.  School counselors are qualified to deliver school counseling curriculum to all students that focuses on prevention and early intervention. They are uniquely trained to identify students who may require more intensive services. These services all contribute to a safe and healthy school climate and would be a better investment of the school safety allotment. Chaplains or any other individuals without school counselor credentials are not positioned to have an impact on school safety and cannot provide the necessary support for all students.  Thank you for your support for school counseling and for the best possible outcomes for all students. |
| Oppose parents’ rights bill that would force school counselors to out students | School counselors collaborate with families/teachers/ administrators/ community for student success.  School counselors recognize our primary obligation is to the student, but we balance that obligation with an understanding of the family or guardians’ legal and inherent rights to be the guiding voice in their children’s lives. We encourage and support students to have conversations with their families when facing life's challenges and actively pursue collaboration with families to ensure success for all students.  SB 49 includes language that requires parents be  "notified prior to any changes in the name or pronoun used for a student in school records or by school personnel, notice to the parent of the change".  This could create unintended safety concerns and potential harm to students. This bill, if passed, could have an even greater negative impact on students.  I request an amendment to SB 49 to remove this notification requirement.  By removing this segment of SB 49, you will significantly reduce the potential harm to our students.  Thank you in advance for supporting all students and keeping our students safe. |
| Support bill that seeks to lower student to school counselor ratio | House Bill 763: Limit School Counselor Ratios would have a positive impact on the services school counselors provide by improving our student-to-counselor ratios in public schools across North Carolina. I am asking that you give this bill serious consideration prior to the end of the current session.  Based on student outcome research, the American School Counselor Association along with the North Carolina School Counselor Association recommends that student-to-counselor ratios not exceed 250 : 1. And while this ratio is optimal, grade level and socioeconomic factors require close consideration. School counselors specialize in helping all students succeed in school and plan for their future.  Based on this expertise, school counselors are uniquely positioned to facilitate the peer-to-peer student support programs described in Session Law 2023-78 (House Bill 605): Threat Assessment Teams and if enacted, co-facilitate with the necessary stakeholders the requirements set forth in Senate Bill 193: Career Development Plans/Study Individual Graduation Plans.  However, we will not be able to successfully and efficiently do so without additional school counselors. Therefore, I am asking that you support one full-time equivalent licensed certified school counselor position per 250 students in each school grades K-12. Funding for this initiative must supplement, not supplant, pre-existing school counselor positions.  Thank you for your continued support. |