

To: House Committee on Education

From: Teresa Conrad

Date: 3/10/2019

Re: Opposition to HB 2441-1 (Coordinated Comprehensive School Counseling Program)

I am writing to voice concerns about House Bill 2441-1.

I am a Professional School Counselor (PSC) in the Newberg School District. I have worked as a PSC in the high school setting for 13+ years and a teacher for 3 years prior to that time. I am writing to voice concerns about House Bill 2441-1. In my role as a PSC, I work as an educational professional, a mental health professional, and a college and career professional. My background and training in School Counseling has prepared me for these roles. In my preparation, in addition to teaching time, I was required to have training and background in all areas of mental health, personal and social counseling from counseling theory, risk assessment, counseling techniques, case management, referrals, classroom teaching and instruction, and transition planning for college, careers and community involvement.. The Masters in School Counseling program to become a PSC requires 90 post graduate credits of study, compared to a MA Ed for teaching of 45 credits. Our program of study requires a practicum and a year-long internship with close supervision, video- taping of counseling sessions demonstrating appropriate use of counseling techniques, case formations, and reviews. Evidence of knowledge and skill in the afore mentioned competencies must be demonstrated in order to become licensed. School Counselors are highly trained professionals!

My concerns with HB 2441-1 in allowing School Social Workers to implement Comprehensive School Counseling are as follows:

1. If School Social Workers are seeking the licensure to work in schools and implement Comprehensive School Counseling (CSCP), in the same capacity as a Professional School Counselors, then I deduce that those with this degree have received the same training as licensed School Counselors. If this is the case, why do we need the different path to the same work? People who are interested in working in the same capacity as a licensed School Counselor should simply enroll in a licensed School Counselor program of study. Are we also creating and allowing an alternate path to teaching, but not calling them teachers? My suspicion is the SSW are not receiving the same training, and therefore are ill equipped to handle the demands of implementing a CSCP. In fact, colleges (ie PSU for example) do not allow a duplication of program components. If there is not duplication of program components, then the SSW are not prepared to meet the demands of working in an educational system and implement a Comprehensive School Counseling Program.
2. PSC are not only mental health professionals, we are also educational professionals with teaching and classroom experience. Our over-arching goal is to help students develop the knowledge and skills they need in order to be a successful students and transition on to becoming successful, happy, contributing adults. As educational professionals, we teach in classrooms on topics ranging from safe touch to when and why to take the SAT. Additionally, much of the day of a school counselor is occupied with responding to

- mental, emotional, social and physical health issues that can and do interfere with students healthy functioning and therefore, accessing their education. The holistic approach to students in schools is not matched or met with a SSW degree.
3. There is no need for this attempt at duplicating what already exists! It confuses the system and takes time and scarce resources away from forward movement in how we collectively respond to student needs.
  4. My suspicion is that the presentation of this bill is related to the increase in mental health issues that impact our young people today. To address this concern, which is a valid concern, I say we do not need a different type of degree or background in training. Rather, we need more licensed Professional School Counselors in the schools! Our current ratios are much higher than the recommended ratios of school counselor to student. The recommended ratios are 1:250. At my high school, our ratio is 1:380 and other schools' ratios are much higher. School Counselors have the background and training to meet the mental health demands of assessment, counseling and referral. At Newberg, we work closely with our community partners for referrals. We have community partners in place who assist families so that our referrals result in successful hand-offs to the necessary supports the families may need—from counseling, to housing.
  5. If licensed Professional School Counselors are in short supply in certain locations of the state, then allowing these locations access to those who are less prepared to meet the demands of meeting student needs is not the answer. This is short-sighted and giving some of the neediest districts less than what they need.
  6. I urge those who might consider supporting HB 2441-1 to look at the training and expertise that is required of a licensed Professional School Counselor. I invite you to visit our schools which are implementing Comprehensive School Counseling Programs to see what we do and appreciate our unique set of training, competencies, and skills so that you can learn that approval of an alternate pathway to this work is not only unnecessary, but it undermines the work that is already being done and gives those who would choose to use SSW less than what is needed.

I respectfully urge that you do not support HB 2441-1.

Sincerely,



Teresa Conrad, MA  
School Counselor  
Newberg High School