

Dear House Education Committee,

I am communicating with you with regard to HB 3395. This bill would allow school districts to employ individuals licensed as school social workers to provide to students in kindergarten through grade eight services that school counselors provide. I request that you vote NO on this bill.

I am Heather Hadraba, program director of the Lewis & Clark College School Counseling program. As a school counselor educator, I have a deep appreciation and clear understanding of the training, role, and work of professional school counselors. The work of a school counselor is centrally focused on equity and social justice. School counselors are systemic change agents, equity agents, and agents of PK-12 college-going cultures. I oppose this legislation because school counselors are the only educational leaders that have the educational preparation to conscientiously work to provide the comprehensive counseling and guidance services stipulated in OARs 541-022-1510, 541-022-0405, or 541-022-1130. I request that you vote NO on this bill unless you are thoroughly convinced that school social workers are prepared to meet the requirements of these OARs, it would not only be unethical for them to be placed in these roles but also certainly not in the best interests of students nor the school buildings and districts in which they are placed nor even in the best interests of the school social worker.

School counselors engage in coordinated program planning that result in school specific action plans which promote the academic, personal-social, career development of PK-12 students. Moreover, school counselors also have a depth of understanding related to the development of a PK-12 college going culture and possess the unique skill set to create interventions that aim to increase the college and career readiness of diverse student populations. School counselors commit to increasing college access for traditionally underserved populations; and they understand how this essential work begins in elementary school. At the heart of the work of PK-12 school counselors is the intentional engagement in systematic processes for utilizing data to address equity and effectiveness in their current practices.

What I suggest is that you vote no on this HB 3395 and then recommend that a special committee or commission be convened to review the preparation standards for school social workers to determine if they are being adequately prepared to fulfill these OARs or at the very least that you seek input from the ODE Specialists legally responsible for seeing that these legal mandates be fulfilled.

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