

To: House Committee on Education
From: Shereena Johnston
Date: 3/10/19
Re: Opposition to HB 2441-1 (Coordinated Comprehensive School Counseling Program)

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

My main concern about this bill is its proposal to allow social workers to perform the job of licensed school counselors. If this is allowed, it would be doing a huge disservice to students, families, the community, and school counselors who are licensed in the profession.

Over the past three years, I have worked tirelessly to complete my Master of Arts in School Counseling. I have received extensive training in teaching and lesson plan design, clinical and mental health, counseling skills, college and career guidance, American School Counseling Association (ASCA) mindsets and program design, and so much more. While licensed social workers are needed in the school system, and have an important role (to serve as school social workers), their training by no means replaces the training of a licensed school counselor.

Allowing a social worker to take over school counseling positions would mean putting someone in the role that isn't properly trained in comprehensive school counseling programs. If a social worker wants to become a school counselor, they can, if they complete the graduate certificate that would give them the necessary training they need to cover the learning targets and topics they would have missed in their social work education.

While I agree that social workers are needed and serve as a value role, comparing a social worker's role to the role of a licensed school counselor is like comparing apples to oranges. Both roles are in place to support children and families, but in entirely different ways, and both require specific specialized training. I'm sure many licensed social workers would agree that a licensed school counselor would have some additional things to learn before they step into a social work role, just as social workers have additional things to learn before stepping into a school counselor role. Let's stick to what we have been trained to do so we can be competent in our jobs and support students and families the best way possible. Trying to do someone else's job without the additional proper training could be very damaging to our youth and their families.

I ask/urge that you not support HB 2441-1.

Sincerely,

Shereena Johnston
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