



New York State Society for Clinical Social Work, Inc.

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September 29, 2021

Hon. Shelley B. Mayer
222 Grace Church St., Rm. 300
Port Chester, NY 10573

Hon. John Liu
38-50 Bell Blvd., Ste. C
Bayside, NY 11361

Dear Senators Mayer and Liu,

The New York State Society for Clinical Social Work, Inc., founded in 1968, represents the views of clinical social workers in the public and private sector throughout New York State. As the organization representing the largest number of social work clinicians in New York State, we provide mental health services and practice in virtually every setting in the health care delivery system, including New York State School Districts and the Big 5 School Systems.

We appreciate your invitation to comment on school spending of Foundation Aid in regard to the practice of School Social Workers. The Clinical Society supports your interest in improving and adding quality counseling and mental health services for school children in the face of the pandemic which has placed additional and substantial emotional burdens on students.

Across the United States twenty-five million students were physically out of school for thirteen months starting in March 2020. Prior to COVID-19, students have experienced issues including social anxiety, depression, bullying, bullying via social media, pregnancy, drug abuse, eating disorders, self-harm activities (such as cutting), suicide, homelessness and reactions to school shootings. The pandemic and social isolation for the past twenty months has now increased anxiety about starting and returning to school in New York State. Students are also concerned about fitting in, engaging in basic social skills with peers, vaccination issues as well as long-term COVID-19 issues.

As Clinicians we suggest:

1. Insure free school healthy meals in every district both breakfast and lunch.
 - Research shows a reduction of bullying and fighting when the issue of hunger is addressed and these programs are provided.
 - Learning and social interaction increases when the issue of lack of food and homelessness is addressed.

2. Hire more Licensed Clinical Social Workers.
 - Additional Mental Health Specialists are urgently needed.
 - At least 500 additional Clinicians needed upstate to match New York City's program.
 - The salary differential is (in some instances can be \$20,000 or more) a problem between NYC's Department of Education and Upstate Services. This destabilizes continuity of employees which is basic to a consistent reliable source of staff.



3. Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)

- In School Districts the Student ratio is not as simple as 1 Clinician to 250 Students.
- The number of interventions depends on many variables which include funding sources, the character of the school district (marginalized communities), the Principal, and Federally mandated service plans. We suggest a ratio of 1-50 to properly service the School District.

4. Licensed Master Social Workers (LMSWs)

- LMSWs are required to be clinically supervised by LCSWs, psychologists or psychiatrists licensed in New York State to obtain the necessary supervised experience to advancing to LCSW.
- We suggest additional LCSWs hired to meet the supervision requirements.

We hope the Foundation Aid will be used in the service of a long-term commitment to our youth who have experienced a significant decrease in their development and learning expectations.

Thank you again for the invitation to contribute to this important project. We look forward to being part of the solution.

Sincerely,

Marsha Wineburgh

Marsha Wineburgh, DSW, LCSW-R NYSSCSW
Legislative Chair

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