



January 27, 2022

The Honorable Joseph M. McNamara
House Education Committee, Chair
RI State House

Re: 2021 House Bill 5936, Relating to Education – Health and Safety of Pupils – Trauma Informed Schools Act

Dear Rep. McNamara:

Please accept this letter from Comprehensive Community Action Inc. for support of 2021 House Bill 5936, Relating to Education – Health and Safety of Pupils – Trauma Informed Schools Act.

Comprehensive Community Action Program (CCAP), a private 501 © (3) non-profit agency established in 1965 as part of President Johnson’s War on Poverty. Initially servicing Cranston, Coventry, Scituate and Foster, many of our services are now statewide. Our mission is to empower all people and communities, challenged by poverty as well as social and cultural barriers, through advocacy, education, and access to high quality health and human services. Our services include four health centers, dental clinics, behavioral health and substance abuse treatment; WIC nutrition assistance; maternal child home visiting; Early Head Start, Head Start, pre-kindergarten and childcare; GED assistance, job training/workforce development to youth through four youth centers and to parents receiving public assistance through RI Works; three different community substance abuse prevention initiatives, two Health Equity Zones; residential services for young parents; child welfare; case management; low income heating and weatherization; food pantry; the Rhode Island Donation Exchange offering free/low cost new and gently used items; financial literacy and tax preparation; and crisis responses to low income individuals. We served 43,424 low-income





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individuals during the 10/1/20 – 9/27/21 timeframe; over 80% of our consumers utilize more than one program/service.

We support the above-named bill for the following reasons:

- It is important to lay the foundation for positive school experiences and school success in the early years. This involves having well trained/skilled school personnel in the elementary schools. While we offer prevention services to targeted schools/communities through substance abuse task forces, this model targets middle and high schools. Expanding prevention efforts by training the staff in Trauma Informed Practices at the elementary school level would enhance potential benefits to the school and students.
- Head Start programs, serving children up to age five, have a model that incorporates well trained and skilled multidisciplinary staff who collectively work with young children and their families. The team includes educators, social service advocates, nutritionists, and nurses. We have learned that staff with different roles/responsibilities can work successfully together to make a difference in the lives of these children/families. This bill promotes training and support for all school personnel regardless of their role; our experience demonstrates the effectiveness.
- Lastly, the implementation of a Trauma Informed philosophy serves to sensitize everyone who ‘touches’ that child in terms of how disturbing situations (personal, familial, environmental and societal) can impact a child including cognitive development. The pandemic has negatively impacted child mental health. Passing this bill and all it represents would help mitigate some of those negative effects.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill.

Sincerely,

Seena S. Franklin

Seena S. Franklin, LICSW

Vice President of Program Development

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