

In Support of: House Bill 6045 – Social Workers in Schools

House Finance Committee

City: Newport

April 29, 2025

Hello, my name is Pachola Ibanez, and I am in favor of bill HB6045 to increase the number of school social workers. Many of us come to this country from places where mental health support is limited. I am from Guatemala, where it is not common to have access to counselors, and where many parents do not believe that stress, anxiety, or experiences with family conflict can impact children's mental health.

When I was growing up, I witnessed arguments between my parents, and as the oldest sibling, I often had to step in to help my mother take care of my younger brothers and sisters. Those experiences affected me deeply. I grew up worrying that my parents would separate, and living in that stress made my childhood difficult.

Because of what I lived through, I made the decision to leave my daughter's father. I didn't want my daughter to grow up in the same cycle I experienced. However, I now realize that even though I made that choice for her well-being, it has still affected her. She struggles in school, has a hard time focusing, and feels stressed because she does not see her parents together. She asks me questions about why things are the way they are, and it is hard for me to find the right words to explain, especially without causing her more pain.

Having more school social workers would make a huge difference—not just for children like my daughter, but for parents like me, who need help supporting their children through difficult emotions and life transitions.

I urge you to listen to our stories. Please pass HB6045—not just for us as parents, but for the sake of our children. Thank you for your time.