

To: House Finance Committee

From: Brenda M. Bachman, MSW, LICSW, Licensed School Social Worker

Date: March 14, 2025

Re: House Bill 6054 titled AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION-THE EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AND PROPRTY TAX RELIEF ACT

Dear Mr. Abney and esteemed members of the finance committee,

As a veteran school social worker in the Newport Public Schools for over 15 years, I am writing to you in strong support of proposed legislature Bill HB6054. I am aware firsthand of the impact social work support can have on creating and maintaining a positive educational experience and milieu.

You are all aware of the many challenges our students confront each day: poverty, family disruption, social pressures, physical disease and disability and many others. These issues often lead to further problems of truancy and increased absences, disruptive behaviors and overall poor academic performance. Separate from the compassionate and moral issues, they cost the schools money to address in non-teaching staff time, police intervention and crisis calls. My years of experience have shown me that when social work diagnosis, intervention and support are available, many of these negatives can be prevented or reduced in the severity of their impact on students, staff and, in many cases, families. Unfortunately, however, many times, social workers are overwhelmed by demand leaving students and staff struggling with situations for which they are unprepared.

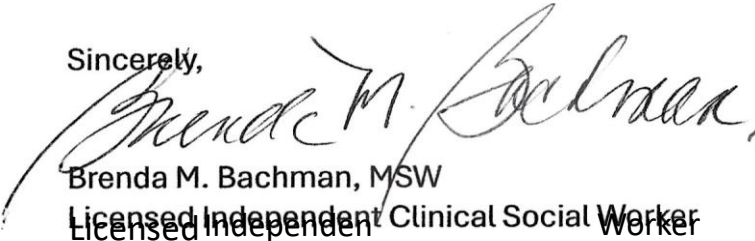
In one case, I worked extensively with a child from the "behavioral disordered class" ...he was loud, disruptive and occasionally violent, sometimes resulting in the dean's involvement and suspension. I was able to engage him, listen to him and teach him how to regulate and control his feelings and therefore, his actions. The principal at the time was skeptical and wanted to discuss an expensive alternate placement. While meeting in my office, there was a knock and in came that student who said, "Miss, I want to punch him, can I I chill out here so I don't get in trouble." When calm, he left the room, no incident, no expensive placement. Sadly, this fellow was one of many...for many others the demand on my time, as well as time lost as an itinerant, prohibited my ability to intervene.

In another situation, the dean came to me over a student who was tardy and disrespectful. The dean was frustrated that he couldn't "get to the kid." He was seeking guidance on how to engage the student and manage the behavior. After our consultation where I offered techniques to shape the dean's responses, the dean reported success...more regular attendance, less time out of class. The dean reported success in using those techniques with other students.

Last, while out in the community I was approached by a young man with a little girl in his arms. At first, I didn't recognize him, but he said, "Miss, I wanted my daughter to meet the lady who kept me in school. Miss, I have a good job now and I'm taking care of my little girl." He was a student from several years ago whose girlfriend became pregnant in their junior year. I worked with the couple to gain services and encouraged and advocated for them to finish high school. He did, she didn't...could I have made a difference if I had more time available to work with the young mother? I don't know, but I've always wondered. By approving this bill, you would give future professional social workers a chance to answer that question. I encourage you to do so.

Thank you for giving me the time to share my experience from the trenches. I hope that you will approve HB6054 for the benefit of our students, staff and budgets.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brenda M. Bachman". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Brenda M. Bachman, MSW

Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker