

Good afternoon Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Aliah, I am a student at Mount Pleasant High School and a youth advocate at Young Voices. I am here today to ask for your support in passing Bill H7456.

Throughout my life, I have moved from place to place often. As a result, I have attended many different schools, where I had to start from zero every time. I have noticed that social workers, and their accessibility, are essential for students. Schools should be safe places for everyone: immigrants, students facing mental health challenges, and those who need special education support. Social Workers create those spaces, for youth like me, who can often feel lost and alone in new environments.

There have been multiple times when I needed a social worker, but my old school either did not have enough staff, or had only one social worker responsible for too many students. No young person should ever have to be in that position. Having students only meet with Social Workers occasionally for limited amounts of time harms the relationship of trust between adults and young people that we need to make our schools welcoming and safe.

I should have the knowledge and confidence that I can rely on there to be a specialist at my school to support me, encourage me, and ensure that I have a bright future ahead of them. All students deserve that.

For all these reasons, I urge you all to pass for Bill H7456
Thank you for your time,

Aliah