

Testimony of Barbara A. Lockhart, MS
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February 16, 2016

Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Secondary Education sub-committee:

My name is Barbara Lockhart and I am the Immediate Past President of the Connecticut Youth Services Association, and the Director of Youth Services for The Town of Montville. Currently there are over 100 Youth Service Bureaus in Connecticut, serving over 145 communities. According to Connecticut General Statute 10-19m Youth Service Bureaus are mandated to be the coordinating agencies of community based services, in the provision and delivery of comprehensive programs and services supporting education, prevention, intervention, mental health and treatment services, diversion and positive youth development initiatives.

I apologize that I was unavailable to testify in person today, as my work duties have me otherwise engaged. I would like to focus on the issue of mental health as it relates to the overall safety of the children and families in our CT communities. It is important for you to be aware of the myriad of mental health services which are delivered through so many Youth Service Bureaus in many of our communities. In light of the multiple tragedies in our state and across the nation related to mental health issues, YSBs are more committed than ever to the delivery of mental health services. We all know that when tragedy strikes a community that even though initially these communities are inundated with offers of help and support; the truth is that ultimately communities need and rely on "each other" more than anyone else, and this often includes connecting with and reaching out to community agencies such as YSBs. Often the comfort and familiarity which children and families have with their local YSBs is reflective of a deep and positive history.

The recent requirements of CT schools to improve school climate and create student success plans ties directly into the overall mental, social, and emotional well-being of both children and families in our communities. Children who feel connected to a network of caring adults, and believe they can ask for help, and adults that are aware of the needs of children provides an opportunity to access the services that may be needed. Often schools refer to and partner with YSBs in their efforts to provide students and their families with the support they need in many situations such as family discord, crisis intervention, etc. Schools also often call upon an YSB as a part of the crisis response team for incidents that may warrant our presence.

In partnership with the State Department of Education, CYSA is has collected data in an RBA framework in a statewide report card, which provides a comprehensive inventory of the services and programs provided by YSBs. This state report card is available at www.ctyouthservices.org

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.