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Memorandum in Opposition

SB 6002 / AB 981

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to the establishment of a school certificate title for school mental health practitioners

The New York State and New York City Chapters of the National Association of Social Workers, The New York State Society for Clinical Social Work and The New York State School Social Workers' Association, collectively representing over 20,000 social workers across the state, oppose SB 6002 / AB 981

School Social Workers serve a critical role in our educational system, tackling the social, emotional, behavioral and mental health needs of students that are proven barriers to student learning. Research has shown their services improve academic and behavioral outcomes, promote a positive school climate, and provide effective and vital student support services by maximizing school based and community resources. School Social Workers possess both a certification (issued by the New York State Education Department Office of Teaching Initiatives) and a license as a Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) or Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) under Article 154 of the Education Law. Within the context of such licenses, strict comprehensive clinical educational and experiential requirements are defined for each scope of practice. Such clinical core competencies exceed that of the Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, Licensed Mental Health Counselors, Creative Arts Therapists and Psychoanalysts. Absent extensive changes to core clinical curriculum for such licensees, we, the above noted, must oppose this bill.

While we assume the motivation for SB 6002 / AB 981 is to expand the pool of mental health providers serving the needs of our children, we do not think it beneficial (given the oftentimes complicated mental health needs of children) to do so, with practitioners whose current clinical education and experience is less than school based practitioners presently providing services.

The shortage of mental health services for children is not solved by opening the door to more mental health professions, especially when they have not been trained to work within an educational setting. Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, Licensed Mental Health Counselors, Creative Arts Therapists and Psychoanalysts have a great deal to offer through community agencies where the Office of Mental Health can oversee licenses and insure the appropriate clinical supervision prescribed in their respective licensure statutes.

For the above stated reasons, we collectively oppose SB 6002 / AB 981.