



Senate Education Committee

July 17, 2012

Testimony Related to Interim Charges #1

Senate Interim Charge 1: Study public school management practices, including the use and options for shared services for both academics and operations.

Good morning, Senator Seliger and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about public school management practices.

My name is Sue Milam. I represent the Texas Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. Our membership of approximately 6,000 is a subset of the more than 17,000 licensed social workers practicing in Texas. The type of social worker I am going to focus on today is the School Social Worker.

School Social Workers are relevant to this discussion because what they do can impact the effectiveness of school administrators and teachers. Ask principals who have had a school social worker as a part of their team, and they will tell you how valuable they are. They can tell you that when their school experiences a substance abuse crisis, chronic absenteeism, disruptive classroom behavior, suspicion of child abuse, bullying, suicide and the like...they have a trained professional who can intervene and make a difference for the child, thereby allowing the teachers and the administration to do the work they are charged with. Without a school social worker, these serious issues must be handled by someone whose primary job is not social service assessment and intervention.

I started my career as a teacher. In my first kindergarten class, I had a child who, at age 5, was already exhibiting very antisocial behavior and who I thought needed professional help. But our school did not have many resources, and my only choices were to allow the child to continue to disrupt the classroom or send him to the principal, who did not have resources either. I have always wondered what happened to that child. If only we had had a school social worker who could have assessed the child's needs, worked with the parents, and facilitated a proper referral if needed. That would have been in the best interest of the child and the rest of the students and faculty.

The reason I am bringing this to your committee is the fact that school social workers are currently not included in the Texas Education Code, a seemingly bureaucratic issue, but one that creates problems for school administrators and school social workers. To list school social workers in the Education Code gives legitimacy to their role and provides an avenue for administrators to more easily include them in their staffing arrangements. We are hoping to bring forth legislation in the next session that will add school social workers to the code so school administrators have another option to help the children of their school succeed.

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Milam". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "S" and a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

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