



**Senate Committee on Education  
October 30, 2012**

**Testimony Related to Charge #8:** Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Education, 82nd Legislature, Regular and Called Sessions, and make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, and/or complete implementation. Specifically, monitor the following: SB 6, relating to the establishment of the instructional materials allotment; SB 8, relating to the flexibility of the board of trustees of a school district in the management and operation of public schools; HB 1942, relating to bullying in public schools.

Chairwoman Shapiro, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding school-based strategies and best practices to improve, enhance and encourage at-risk youth to finish school and that deter bullying, delinquency, substance abuse and violence.

My name is Sue Milam, and I serve as the Director of Government Relations for the Texas Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. I am here to call attention to the fact that the presence of School Social Workers can assist schools by addressing the family and community issues that often prevent a child from attending school or performing well academically.

According to the Texas Education Agency, there are approximately 4.9 million students throughout the state in 2012. Over 59 percent of these children are considered to be economically disadvantaged. The Texas Education Agency also reported that the 2011 high school longitudinal drop-out rate stood at approximately 6.8 percent.

Those statistics alone point to the need to address additional factors beyond the school day. Social workers in school settings can help these students through early identification, prevention, counseling and support. They can determine if a child is inattentive because of family stress, or missing school because of lack of consistent transportation. A social worker can find out if neighborhood gang activities serve as a deterrent for youth who might otherwise come to school and graduate.

Social workers are uniquely positioned to fill that role by the fact that they receive training in the profession's comprehensive assessment framework and the flexible range of interventions to deal with complex biological, social, and psychological barriers. Moreover, social workers understand the value of and the necessity for evidence based practice, while struggling to maintain the creative, clinical judgment deemed necessary for individual situations.

Most school administrators and principals know the value a School Social Worker brings to their campuses. It enables them to have someone who is trained in creating and implementing bullying prevention policies and programs as well as to address the myriad of other child/family/community problems that appear in a school setting. We are working on a bill for the upcoming session that will add a definition of School Social Workers to the Texas Education Code to provide a structure and an understanding of the role they can play. We believe this will give clarity for school administrators on the role of School Social Workers relative to other existing professionals and provide another resource for managing the needs of their schools.

Thank you.

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