Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I am a constituent in your area and a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (your position and if you have children attending school in this you area).

I am writing about a specific piece of legislation, (**SB1162/HB1045)** titled “Certified School Counselors”. This proposed bill came about because we know from research that bullying and discipline problems are dramatically reduced and academic successes increased for students when school counselors are given the appropriate amount of time to deliver classroom lessons and work with students individually and in small groups. Yet far too frequently school counselors are tapped to use their work time on “other” services, rather than applying their graduate degree skills and knowledge to directly impact students. For example, we know frequently school counselors are pulled from working directly with students, families, and teachers, and assigned as test coordinators, which translates to counselors spending as much as three months of time dealing with clerical type work related to testing. This seems a poor use of graduate level personnel at the least and a waste of fiscal resources when their time can be used to work directly with students.

The other issue that the bill addresses is that schools in our state – 194 schools in fact – do not have a school counselor (OPPAGA Study Report, March 2014). This bill would support ***all*** students in Florida, and not leave any student without a school counselor.

As with other instructional staff in a school, school counselors are trained to work preventively by delivering a data driven program based on each school’s needs to support academic success, address social problems that students wrestle with, prevent bullying, and guide in the **critical development** of career education and planning for postsecondary pursuits – all with the intent to facilitate every student’s success in school and prepare them for success as our next generation.

This bill is particularly timely given state and national workforce projections that over 60% of Florida jobs will require some form of postsecondary education or training by the year 2020, yet **currently, only about 38%** of the working-age Floridians holds an associate’s degree or higher.

I am asking you to please consider supporting this critical piece of legislation and sign on as a co-sponsor to put a school counselor in every school in Florida and dedicate 80% of a school counselor’s time delivering programs and services directly to students and their families, teachers, and administrators. Our children’s well-being now and their futures depend on it.

Sincerely,

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