November 1, 2018

Office of the North Carolina State Board of Education
301 North Wilmington Street, Room 212
6302 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-6302

Dear North Carolina State Board of Education Members,

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers North Carolina Chapter (NASW-NC), we are writing to advocate for a School Social Work Coordinator position within the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. NASW-NC is a membership organization with 4,500 social work members that promotes, develops, and protects the practice of social work and social workers. NASW-NC also seeks to enhance the effective functioning and well-being of individuals, families and communities through its work and advocacy.

DPI plans to request $71.5 million for new nurses, social workers, counselors, psychologists and school resource officers to reach nationally recommended ratios for North Carolina’s public school.

Three days after a student was fatally shot at a North Carolina high school, it is apparent that a School Social Work Coordinator position is needed now, more than ever, to support the Public Schools of North Carolina. This position is critical to support the mental and physical health and safety of our students, our schools and school social workers across North Carolina. There are currently 1,016.78 full time equivalent school social work positions across the state of North Carolina and is the only Student Support Services profession not to have a dedicated coordinator at DPI.

What do school social workers do?

- **School social workers** help students deal with a wide range of challenges such as failing grades, bullying, violence, thoughts of suicide and other mental health issues, chronic absenteeism and difficult home situations.
- **School social workers** are trained and licensed professionals who provide a link between the home, school and community through support services that positively impact the development of the whole child.
- **School social workers**, with their crisis management expertise, clinical proficiency and leadership skills, are uniquely positioned to assist all members of the educational community when a crisis occurs.
- **School social workers** are experts in research-based school discipline policy development that can increase school connectedness and decrease incidents of school violence.

In 2017, the North Carolina Child Fatality Task Force endorsed efforts to appropriate $100,000 in recurring funds for a full time School Social Worker Consultant to be housed in DPI Student Support Services to provide coordination, training, support, and data collection for school social workers in North Carolina.

Further, the pay scale for school social workers must be adjusted. Currently, North Carolina school social workers are paid on the teacher scale which means masters level social workers do not get paid for having an advanced
master’s degree. Many school districts request school social workers to be a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) which requires a Master of Social Work and continuing education requirements but these positions are paid at the bachelor’s degree level. Because of the pay issue, many school districts are unable to hire master’s level social workers and thus have issues filling positions. NASW-NC is calling on you to support a change to the current pay scale and allow school social workers to be paid for their advanced Master of Social Work degree. Ensuring that master’s level pay is reinstated is important so it can be implemented fairly across the state.

Thank you for your commitment to hire more school social workers in North Carolina. As you are aware, the current ratio of students to school social workers to students is 1:1,427. The National Association of Social Workers recommends one school social worker per 250 students.

Having a School Social Work Coordinator with the North Carolina Department of Instruction will assist with these changes as well as support school systems across the state to best utilize their school social workers, address districts that have a short fall of professionals, and better communicate with school social workers. All of these changes will empower school social workers to help students and aligns with the mission of the Public Schools of North Carolina.

Sincerely,

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