Legislation Text

File #: 190073, **Version:** 0

Declaring February 4-8, 2019 as "National School Counseling Week" in the City of Philadelphia; recognizing the critical role that school counselors play in meeting students' academic, social/emotional, and postsecondary planning needs; and calling on the School District of Philadelphia to institute the American School Counselor Association's recommended student-counselor ratio of 250 to 1.

WHEREAS, School counselors assist students in reaching their fullest potential by helping young people explore their abilities, interests, strengths and talents both in school and as related to career awareness and development; and

WHEREAS, School counselors are vital to every school community, supporting students in the areas of academic achievement, personal and social development, and career development, and bringing an important perspective to school staff in order to resolve issues small and large; and

WHEREAS, School counselors play a unique role in working with parents, teachers and other educators to develop and support the educational, personal, and social growth of young people; and

WHEREAS, Comprehensive school counseling programs are considered an integral part of the educational process that enable all students to achieve success in school and in their social and emotional lives; and

WHEREAS, School counselors are valued as essential members of safe and successful school environments. They are particularly crucial in school communities that face poverty, high rates of housing insecurity, and trauma; and

WHEREAS, School counselors work with families, staff, and young people dealing with violence, illness, death and other traumas that might otherwise go unaddressed and unsupported. They are critically important caregivers and hubs for community services in schools; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia school counselors in particular have resiliently served young people each and every day, many of them in spite of inadequate resources and growing caseloads; and

WHEREAS, School counselors serve our City's most vulnerable students, including City of Philadelphia system-involved youth and students experiencing homelessness; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia school counselors employ developmentally appropriate interventions for our students including trauma-informed care and school-wide positive behavior support; and

WHEREAS, School counselors have worked diligently to support the college admissions process and postsecondary goal setting for students; and

WHEREAS, In 2016, the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers fought to ensure that each school in the system had at least one counselor. This campaign was an important first step in repairing the net of student support

services that was slashed in 2013. Current School District policy allots one counselor per school, with an additional position added when the school's enrollment surpasses 949 students; and

WHEREAS, Since the 2015 fiscal year, the School District of Philadelphia has added 84 counselor positions, and over 220 school climate support positions, speaking to a renewed commitment to investing in healthy school climates; and

WHEREAS, Despite this growth, there are still too few counselors in our public schools. The American School Counselor Association recommends a counselor to student ratio of 1 to 250. The ratio in Philadelphia district-operated schools is 1 to 392; and

WHEREAS, Like most large school districts in areas with high poverty rates and a majority Black and Latino residents, Philadelphia has more school police officers (359) than counselors (324). In contrast, districts with wealthier and whiter populations typically spend more on counselors than on security; and

WHEREAS, The advocacy of Philly School Counselors United, a professional organization comprised of fearless Philadelphia-based school counselors, has built public will around the need for a counselor to student ratio that appropriately meets the needs of our students and their families; and

WHEREAS, In celebration of 2019's Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Philly School Counselors United hosted a screening of *Personal Statement*, a feature-length documentary that shares the story of Brooklyn-based public high school students who, in the face of inadequate counseling services, take matters into their own hands. The documentary sheds light on the impact of not having enough school counselors to adequately assist students, and the event's organizers were able to amplify their call for investment in more school counselors; and

WHEREAS, As Philly School Counselors United explains, "School counselors help children use their inner strength to overcome the obstacles they face as a result of these challenging circumstances. We are a key component of the educational team, not an 'extra' if the budget allows...Our students have the drive and ability to reach their goals. If the State of Pennsylvania, City of Philadelphia, and other local governments grant this additional funding to the School District of Philadelphia and other school districts throughout the state, districts can facilitate their students' success by hiring more school counselors to provide the academic, social/emotional, and postsecondary planning support that students need and deserve to fulfill their potential"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby declares February 4-8, 2019, as "National School Counseling Week" in the City of Philadelphia; recognizes the critical role that school counselors play in meeting students' academic, social/emotional, and postsecondary planning needs; and calls on the School District of Philadelphia to institute the American School Counselor Association's recommended student-counselor ratio of 250 to 1.

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