

July 31, 2012

Rhonda Capuano, M.P.H., CHES  
Director, School Based Health Center

Dear Ms. Capuano,

My name is Kimberly Smith\* and I am the mother of three children who attend Norwalk schools. Since my daughter Jane\* has been in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, she has used the resources of the School Based Health Center to cope with her anxiety. In the 4<sup>th</sup> grade I recognized that she had a problem with her attendance due to anxiety. I was a frustrated parent and unable to help her. She finished Elementary School and began attending Nathan Hale Middle School which had a School Based Health Center. At that time her older sister introduced her to the idea of going to the school based health center so Jane could independently seek help with her anxiety at school. Jane continued to see the social work professional in the health center and was able to manage her anxiety with tools. With the help of these tools she was able to succeed academically and make the high honor roll in all three years of Middle School. Jane's anxiety increased when she went to high school and was followed by physical problems. Again, she sought the help of the School Based Health Center. At this center it was the licensed clinical social worker who coached her through her following High School years. The social worker provided resources to help Jane and referred her to the health center's adolescent psychiatric consultant, who prescribed her medication. This medication had a huge impact on Jane's life. The most important part of the health center in Jane's life was that it was located in her school. She was able to have weekly visits at no cost and could see the social worker any time during the day if her anxiety was too high. Jane is now going into her senior year and is looking at colleges. On her list of criteria are schools that have health centers similar to the ones in the Norwalk schools that have made it possible for her to strive academically and control her anxiety. These centers are what help shape the person she has become.

This year my younger son will be starting high school. He has also been diagnosed with anxiety. I will be strongly suggesting to him to take advantage of the School Based Health Center as well.

I have come to learn that the resources for the centers are limited and depend on funding. I strongly urge you to take my story into consideration and push for further funding of these programs. Many students have benefited from them and it would be a shame to lose a program that is so important for young people.

Thank you for your time,  
Sincerely,  
Kimberly Smith

\*Names have been changed to protect the family's identity.