



June 2nd, 2025

Chair Pavel Payano
Joint Committee on Consumer Protection and
Professional Licensure
State House, Room 413-B
24 Beacon St
Boston, MA 02133

Chair Tackey Chan
Joint Committee on Consumer Protection and
Professional Licensure
State House, Room 42
24 Beacon St
Boston, MA 02133

Re: H.383/S.283 An Act expanding licensure opportunity for school counselors

Dear Chairman Payano, Chairman Chan, and the Honorable Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Massachusetts (NAMI Mass), I write to express our strong support for **H.383/S.283**, *An Act Expanding Licensure Opportunity for School Counselors*.

NAMI Mass is a grassroots nonprofit organization comprised of individuals with mental health conditions, their families, and caregivers. We provide educational programming in school settings, in which we highlight the importance of seeking help, identifying a trusted adult, self-advocacy, and reducing stigma around mental health conditions. Through this work, we have heard firsthand from students, educators, and staff about the urgent and growing need for mental health support in Massachusetts schools.

According to the U.S. Surgeon General's 2021 Advisory on Protecting Youth Mental Health, youth and adolescents are facing devastating mental health effects that were intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the pandemic, psychological distress among young people, including symptoms of anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions, has increased substantially. The Advisory makes specific recommendations about expanding the childhood mental health workforce to ensure that youth and adolescents have access to care and a full continuum of support within educational, community, and childcare settings.¹

H.383/S.283 addresses the urgent need for increased mental health support staff in schools, by removing unnecessary barriers that currently prevent school-based mental health professionals from pursuing a license as a Licensed Mental Health Counselors (LMHCs). This legislation would not alter LMHC licensure standards but would recognize and credit relevant educational and professional experience already obtained by school counselors and other school-based mental health staff. The training and coursework required for school mental health staff, such as school counselors, adjustments counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists, closely align with that of

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2021). *Protecting youth mental health: The U.S. Surgeon General's advisory* (HHS Publication No. 21-1504). Office of the Surgeon General.

LMHCs, yet many of the above-mentioned qualified professionals are forced to repeat coursework and supervised hours, delaying their ability to complete their licensure requirements for an LMHC. This bill would expand the behavioral health workforce within schools, improve the quality and availability of care, create opportunities for a more diverse population to enter the mental health field, and strengthen collaboration between school-based and community-based mental health providers. Furthermore, more clinicians in school settings means earlier interventions, better-coordinated care, and improved outcomes for our students.

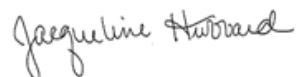
When we fail to leverage all available staff toward addressing the youth mental health crisis, we miss a critical opportunity to support our students. This need is especially urgent now, as harmful rhetoric at the federal level undermines evidence-based care. Most recently, the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services has amplified false claims about the use of selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) for youth and adolescents². This kind of misinformation is dangerous – it stigmatizes mental health treatment, deters youth and adolescents from seeking care, and creates additional barriers to access. In the face of these challenges, Massachusetts must remain steadfast in its commitment to protecting youth mental health and expanding access to support within our schools.

Critically, this legislation also reduces a key barrier to care: stigma. For many youths and adolescents, stigma can make it incredibly difficult to ask for help. Easing the pathway for school-based mental health professionals—whom students already know and trust—to become LMHCs ensures that support is not only available, but approachable. Familiar faces in trusted settings make it more likely that students will seek the help they need when they need it most.

For these reasons, I urge you to report favorably on H.383/S.283 to remove barriers and expand pathways for individuals pursuing licensure as a licensed mental health counselor in school settings, which is an essential step toward improving the mental health of all Massachusetts students.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jacqueline Hubbard, Esq.
Deputy Director of Policy, Advocacy, and Communications
NAMI Massachusetts

² Chuck, E. (2025, February 14). *RFK Jr. claims SSRIs are dangerous for children, but doctors and studies disagree*. NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/rfk-jr-ssri-antidepressants-children-doctors-risks-studies-rcna192722>