



DATE: March 1, 2022

TO: Committee on Children

FROM: Amanda Brenner, Public Policy Intern, The Alliance

RE: H.B. 5241 An Act Providing Funding to School Districts for the Use of Therapeutic Day Schools for Special Education

Representative Linehan, Senator Anwar, Representative Dauphinais, Senator Kelly and distinguished members of the Committee on Children:

My name is Amanda Brenner and I am a MSW student at the UConn School of Social Work and the Public Policy Intern at the Connecticut Community Nonprofit Alliance (The Alliance). The Alliance is the statewide advocacy organization representing nonprofits. Community nonprofits provide essential services to over half a million individuals and families in Connecticut every year, improving the quality of life in communities across the State.

The Alliance urges you to support H.B. 5241 An Act Providing Funding to School Districts for the Use of Therapeutic Day Schools for Special Education.

Therapeutic Day Schools serve students with mental health and behavioral needs, areas of health that are often underestimated and stigmatized. One in six U.S. children aged 2–8 years (17.4%) had a diagnosed mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder and diagnoses of ADHD, anxiety, and depression became more common with increased age.¹ Therapeutic day schools embrace these students as complex humans who need special and individualized attention to succeed. Therapeutic Day Schools use humanistic psychology to look at the whole person and to trust in their abilities of self-actualization.

Some students stay at therapeutic day schools for extended periods while others return to their school district when they have learned the coping skills to succeed academically and socially. These classrooms have a high student to staff ratio so every child gets the attention they need and offer intensive parent interventions.² While most mainstream schools do not have a large enough mental health team to address each student's concerns as often as they should, therapeutic day schools have a crisis intervention team specially trained to deescalate peacefully with minimal interruption to the school day.³ Therapeutic Day Schools cater to children with three or more reported adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Compared to children with zero reported ACEs, these children have a higher

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022, February 24). *Data and Statistics on Children's Mental Health*. Retrieved from

<https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/data.html#:~:text=1%20in%206%20U.S.%20children,%2C%20behavioral%2C%20or%20developmental%20disorder.>

² Cooperative Educational Services. (2022). *Therapeutic Day Program*. [Brochure]

³ Cooperative Educational Services.

prevalence of one or more mental, emotional, or behavioral disorders (36.3% versus 11.0%).⁴ These schools serve incredibly diverse populations across race, ethnicity, gender, academic ability, and socioeconomic status.

Therapeutic Day Schools provide a vital and undervalued service and deserve grant funding to advance the futures of current students and begin to serve new ones. In a year where the legislature has put children's behavioral health at high priority, we should be supporting successful behavioral health interventions.

Please support H.B. 5241. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.