MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

June 11, 2015

A.6763 (Ortiz)

An act to amend the education law, in relation to requiring a licensed social worker in each elementary, intermediate, middle, junior high and senior high school

The New York University (NYU) Silver School of Social Work strongly supports A.6763, which would amend the education law to require a licensed social worker in each elementary, intermediate, middle, junior high and senior high school. Specifically, this bill would require the board of trustees of every school district to employ at least one licensed social worker in each school under their jurisdiction, with employment being exclusive of any social workers funded or mandated through any special education funding, aid, regulation or statute.

With budget cuts and increased pressure to achieve cost savings, social work staffing levels are diminishing. With performance-based standards being streamlined and the demand for social workers at an all-time high, it is important that the need is met for districts that have limited resources and educate the most at-risk and special needs students. New York University supports this bill because it underscores the growing importance of having a resource for addressing personal and social problems that are known to interfere with students’ ability to learn.

NYU Silver School of Social Work is dedicated to training the next generation of social workers to tackle the social-economic issues that many New York State students face. By requiring that social workers be employed by schools at all levels, these social workers can serve as a liaison between the school, home, and community. They could work with students, families, faculty and administration to improve students’ academic achievement and social, emotional, and behavioral competencies, while ensuring that students are mentally, physically, and emotionally present in the classroom.

The proposed requirements would ensure adequate staffing and availability of school social work services to all students across the State of New York, allowing students a well-trained, licensed resource to address issues that arise. This is consistent with NYU Silver School of Social Work’s mission to educate professionals to work with communities that need the most support.

For these reasons, NYU strongly supports and urges the Legislature to pass this bill.

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