

Betty Connolly Testimony – January 9, 2008
CA State Assembly Education Committee – AB 68 Dymally

Good Afternoon Mr. Chairman and Members, my name is Betty Connolly, current president of the California Association of School Psychologists.

The California Pupil Services Coalition is the sponsor of this bill. CASP is member of the Coalition, that was formed in November 2000 and consists of:

- **School Psychologists**
- **School Nurses**
- **School Counselors**
- **Resource Specialists**
- **Speech-Language & Hearing Specialists**
- **School Social Workers**
- **Pupil Personnel Administrators**
- **AND Supervisors of Child Welfare and Attendance**

Thank you to Assemblymember Dymally and his staff for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of AB 68 the pupil services block grant.

The Pupil Services Coalition represents ten statewide associations of credentialed personnel that work together to support and improve student achievement and personal success. The mission of the group is to work collectively as pupil services organizations for the delivery of education, health, mental health and social services at the school site.

Focusing on the mental, physical and psychological needs of all pupils are critical in the effort to improve student achievement and develop well-rounded students. There is a significant body of research to support the importance of on-going systematic efforts to ensure that a full learning support system is in place. This includes services that feature credentialed personnel working together to support student achievement and personal success.

Second, the pupil support services professionals employed by California's public schools rank at or near the bottom in the nation for the pupil services staff to student ratio. As an example, the ratio of students to psychologists was 1409 students to one psychologist in 2005-06.

With this large a student to staff ratio, it is virtually impossible to provide the level of support and guidance needed by our student population. Finally, if California wants to provide the best opportunity for our students to achieve academic success; we must first take steps to address the needs of the whole child.

To ensure that we have a meaningful impact on student academic success in our schools, and to ensure that students have the opportunity to learn and advance, it is imperative that resources are made available to hire appropriate non-administrative credential personnel.

Allowing additional funding will help ensure that school districts in need of additional school psychologists, counselors, nurses, speech-language pathologists and audiologists, social workers, resource specialists and special education teachers and administrators of pupil personnel services and child welfare and attendance will have the ability and flexibility to fill their specific local needs.

Schools face a myriad of issues that extend far beyond the classroom walls. Services credential personnel help break down barriers to learning and support students in attaining academic success. The issues facing students are far more complex than those in the past. School violence, peer pressure, bullying at school, increasing dropout rates, growing teen suicide rates, and drug and tobacco use, all create barriers to learning.

Further, the student population has changed dramatically over the years with more and more students coming to school with major social, emotional and health needs. More than ever before, pupil support services play a critical role in the academic preparation and social development of our youth. California's pupil support services rank last out of 50 states in the pupil support personnel.