

For the record, I'm Rep McCann from here in Montpelier and today I'll be introducing H. 618. This school counselors bill proposes to require school counselors to spend 80% of their time providing direct or indirect services to students.

You might think, well of course they should be spending 80% or more of their time providing services to students, they are school counselors after all. But, those of us who work in schools and have working knowledge of schools know that personnel are often pulled in many directions.

This bill aims to:

- **Prioritize Student Needs** - By dedicating a larger portion of their time to direct student interaction, counselors can better address individual needs, provide more personalized support, and offer timely interventions as needed.
- **Improved Access to Counseling** - With more time dedicated to student services, counselors can see more students and provide a wider range of support, including academic guidance, career planning, social-emotional development, and crisis intervention.
- **Effective Use of Expertise** - School counselors are trained professionals with specialized skills to address student challenges, and an 80/20 bill ensures they are utilizing their expertise to the fullest.
- **Addressing Overburdened Counselors** - Many school counselors currently juggle a high caseload with administrative tasks, leading to burnout and reduced effectiveness. An 80/20 bill can alleviate this pressure by clearly defining their primary role.
- **Equity and Access** - By ensuring that all students have sufficient access to counseling services, an 80/20 bill can help address disparities in support for students from diverse

backgrounds

In anticipation of a question regarding when this 80/20 split should be negotiated between the school counselors and their local school boards in contract language,

In practice, collective bargaining agreements are overwhelmingly teacher-centric. Because teachers represent the vast majority of licensed staff in any district, contracts are structured around classroom instruction and teacher-specific duties. School counselors make up a much smaller proportion of district staff, and as a result, counselor-specific responsibilities are almost never defined in negotiated agreements.

In fact, there is only one known school contract in the entire country that contains a provision specific to school counselor role clarity. This underscores the reality that contract negotiations are not an effective or reliable mechanism for defining appropriate counselor duties.

Without statutory guidance, school counselors are frequently assigned administrative and non-counseling tasks that diminish their ability to provide essential mental health, academic, and career support services to students.

Many states (ME, TN, WA, PA, TX, NC, UT, VA, AK) have enacted 80/20 legislation or similar statutory protections to ensure that school counselors are utilized in accordance with their professional training. These states recognize that role clarity improves student outcomes, strengthens school climate, and helps address workforce shortages by making the profession more sustainable and professionally aligned.

This bill does not remove local control over contracts or working conditions. Rather, it establishes a clear statewide standard for how licensed school counselors should be deployed—ensuring that students receive the services they deserve and that districts maximize the impact of these highly trained professionals.

I respectfully ask for your support of the 80/20 bill and I know that VTSCA (Vermont School Counselors Association) would welcome the opportunity to provide any additional information that would be helpful.

