

March 12th, 2026

Dear Rep. Berbeco and your committee,

I am writing to express my deep support for the proposed bill H. 817 in support of integrating youth mental health and substance use disorder literacy into the curriculum of our schools. Since middle school and even more so now as a high school student, I have seen and experienced many ways that being a student can take a toll on teen mental health and well-being. Each day, I see the ways my peers are impacted by the stress of an overwhelming workload, the stress of college, and the future. I believe this bill will provide the support that students need to get through the school day, built into the school curriculum, so students are able to get the help they need while eliminating an extra step in their day, such as therapy or other types of youth counseling.

Each and everyday, I watch how the lack of counseling in our schools leads to other types of coping among youth who are not yet old enough to even comprehend what they are putting into their bodies. This is why I believe that, now more than ever, it is so important to integrate substance use disorder counseling into our curriculum for those in need.

Additionally, I am in support of Bill H. 817 not only to help students who are in need of additional help, but also as a preventative measure. In our society today, the stress on all students continues to grow each day. Whether they are trying to figure out their future, or understand what is going on in the world, or even simply trying to get through one day at a time, I believe each student should have the right to a support system that could potentially save their life and the lives of those around them.

As a student, I'm surrounded by these experiences every single day, and constantly feel an obligation to help, as well as genuine concern for my peers. I believe this bill would not only help the youth in need but also prevent many people's struggles with mental health or substance use from getting to a life-altering point of danger.

Sincerely,

Phoebe Krcmar

Winooski High School Junior