

I appreciate the opportunity to share with you today. My name is Margaret Griffin and I am a School Counselor at Soldotna High School. I have a Masters degree in School Counseling.

School Counselors wear so many hats, all with the goal of supporting kids so they can learn and become productive members of society. Some of my major responsibilities include being a leader who trains my staff and teachers about suicide awareness and intervention, mediation, and crisis response. Sometimes we come to school with a plan for the day and then end up spending the day on crisis responsive services. We facilitate mediations between students, educate them about bullying, make OCS reports and connect students with the appropriate professionals. We are often the go-to person to support kids emotionally. We teach career and future planning lessons in the classrooms and help students with their PLCP (Personal Learning and Career Plan). We teach students how to create a scholarship folder and college admissions essay and help them with their college applications and future planning. Counselors are on the front lines when a crisis occurs. I don't have to tell you that the statistics in our state are staggering in terms of suicides, trauma, alcoholism, drugs, and violence and our role is to support kids so they can learn.

Our challenge is balancing all those hats with non-counseling duties such as test coordination, hall duty, scheduling, and other administrative tasks. It breaks my heart that more than 55%-60% of my time is spent on non-counseling duties. 40% of which is test coordination. I coordinate 15 tests throughout the year including PSAT, WorkKeys, ACT in school twice and on Saturday voucher day, SAT voucher day, Science SBA, AMP, ASVAB, and 6 Advanced Placement tests. Most of the time we can't provide the level of support our kids need because we are examining the school map to figure out where to place a small group for testing. Or coordinating with the Sports Center for testing. Or sticking stickers on ACT booklets or Science SBA test books. **This is a tragic misuse of a highly qualified School Counselor.**

All the new CCR testing this year means a lot is falling off our plate. To name a few: New student transition and orientation, Intervention, Academic Advising and PLCP, PSAT interpretation, Hospice Grief Group, Peer Mentor programs, 1 on 1 senior visits, classroom visits to promote college & career readiness & scholarships, Career lessons in classrooms is greatly diminished, we are often simply not available for social emotional response or to communicate to staff about students at risk, and seniors in jeopardy.

I would like to ask you to consider encouraging District and Building Administrators to re-assign the test coordinator stipend position so that School Counselors can focus on what they are supposed to be focused on- which is kids.

I am in favor of HB 80, which would repeal the CCRA graduation requirement and take a lot off our plates.

I would like to ask you to remember the importance of what School Counselors do to support kids across our district with not only their social emotional challenges, but with their career and future goals. Thank you.