

Good morning, Chair Topper and members of the Council. My name is Emilia Mattucci, and I am the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania School Counselors Association. In addition, I am a high school counselor at East Allegheny High School. I have served as a high school counselor for 30 years, and much of my time has been devoted to assisting students in determining their future plans beyond high school.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of the invaluable role that school counselors play in guiding students through the complex process of selecting colleges and majors. As an advocate for student success, I want to highlight the essential support that school counselors provide in ensuring that students are well-informed and prepared for their postsecondary education.

School counselors are uniquely positioned to assist students in making informed decisions about their future. We serve as knowledgeable advisors, helping students explore their interests, strengths, and career aspirations. Through individual counseling sessions, group workshops on topics such as writing a college essay or completing college applications, and both organizing and bringing groups of students to various college fairs, we introduce students to a wide array of postsecondary opportunities that align with their goals and capabilities.

One of the most critical services school counselors offer is college exploration and application guidance. We provide students with up-to-date information about different types of colleges, including public universities, private institutions, community colleges, and trade schools through the use of career exploration programs, College Board resources, and local job trends found in the Occupational Outlook Handbook. School counselors also assist in navigating college entrance requirements, financial aid options, and scholarship opportunities, ensuring that students and their families make informed financial decisions.

Additionally, school counselors play a pivotal role in helping students select appropriate majors that match their skills and interests. By utilizing career assessments, aptitude tests, and one-on-one advising, school counselors help students identify academic programs that align with their long-term career aspirations. We also work closely with teachers and parents to ensure that students are taking the necessary coursework to prepare for their chosen fields.

Beyond academics, school counselors offer emotional and motivational support, especially to first-generation college students and those from underrepresented backgrounds. We demystify the college application process, break down barriers to higher education, and provide encouragement every step of the way. I personally rely on assistance from staff in many university admission departments. I contact them through email or by phone with concerns from my students and their parents, and they have been invaluable sources of information for them. Their assistance has provided a chance for some of my students to attend post-secondary institutions when they may not have done so otherwise.

In conclusion, school counselors are an indispensable resource for students navigating the complex decisions of college and major selection. Our expertise, dedication, and personalized

approach empower students to make informed choices that will shape their futures. I urge this Council to continue supporting and investing resources and incentives to increase student access to postsecondary education so that every student has access to the guidance they need to complete their postsecondary education and succeed in achieving their occupational goals.

Thank you for your time and consideration.