Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

As a school social worker in Fairfax County Public Schools, I want to express my appreciation for House Bill (HB) #398, now incorporated in HB #1508. I am excited to see this bill pass the House, as I see it as a first step to establishing Standards of Quality (SOQ) and consistent high-quality practice for school social workers across Virginia. The ratio of one (1) school social worker to 250 students supports the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA) recommended ratios. This ratio is necessary to provide high quality, multi-tiered evidence-based interventions that support behavior, social-emotional learning, and mental wellness. These interventions result in improved academic and behavioral outcomes. Our practices help promote a school climate that is conducive to learning and teaching excellence. The ratio allows school social workers to maximize access to school-based and community-based resources, providing innovative leadership and professional collaboration.

School social workers have expertise in understanding family and community systems and link students and their families with community resources that are essential for promoting student success and well-being. School social workers have a unique focus on vulnerable populations, as these students are at highest risk of dropping out of school, impacting the on-time graduation rate. With social work intervention, students are able to access necessary supports in order close the achievement gap. School social workers also provide crisis intervention, as they serve as leaders on county-wide crisis teams.

In Fairfax County Public Schools, this bill would benefit approximately 20 schools of 198 schools or centers. I am grateful for this first step and hope to see the ratio of 1:250 implemented in all Virginia public schools. Thank you for your support of HB #1508 and making a statement of value in school social workers.

Sincerely,