



Judy Wyatt
House
Steve Landes

Not Pictured

Karla Williams Boughey **Karen Papasodora-Cochrane**
Senate House

Walter Stosch

House
James Leftwich

David A Bovenizer

House
R. Lee Ware

Jennifer Peters
House
Margaret B. Ransone

Margaret Dalton

House
Randall Minchew

Rose Pruden
House
Joseph Lindsey

Abbi Easter

Senate
Donald McEachin

BJ Robertson
House
Chris Head

Linda Gross

House
Manoli Loupassi

Judy Robinson
House
Bobby Orrock

Gretchen Heal

House
David Yancey

Lisa Scott
House
Edward Scott

James Heo

House
Mark Sickles

Cheryl Simmons
Senate
Jeff McWaters

Jody Hopkins

House
Robert Bloxom

Jason Stanford
House
Alfonso Lopez

Glen Hudgins

Senate
Frank Wagner

Peggy Tyree-Wells
Senate
Charles Colgan

Renee Hudson

House
Bobby Orrock

Rama Van Pelt
House
David Bulova

Kate Kruk

House
Bill Howell

Matthew Weinstein
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Richard Sullivan

Muriel LaMois

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Erika Williams
House
Joe Morrissey

Gina Lauterio

House
Randall Minchew



Professional School Counseling

By **BRETT WELCH**

When talking with our Virginia Senators and Delegates, we often hear two key and apropos questions: what role do school counselors play in our schools and what do we need to do our jobs more effectively? Professional school counselors are in every school level (Elementary, Middle and High) wearing professional hats of all shapes, colors and sizes! First and foremost, we are mental health professionals and licensed educators trained in school counseling with unique qualifications and skills to address all students' academic, personal/social and career development needs. We collaborate with school stakeholders to advocate for students to feel safe, ensure equity and access to educational rigor, and encourage the leader inside each of them to pursue what lies beyond K-12 education. We are often the hearts and the historians of the schools, as we work with multiple children in a family, becoming the bridge between home and school and advocate for the whole child. We have the unique opportunity to look at the big picture for each student, as we are typically his/her counselor over multiple years, and parents rely on us to be their voices when they cannot be present. Our goal and mandate is to address the needs of all students through prevention and intervention programs that are a part of a comprehensive school counseling program. [Adapted from *VSCA Professional School Counseling Program Manual*, (VSCA, 2008)] Unfortunately, there are many other responsibilities outside of these essential roles that also fall to the counselor, though what those responsibilities are differ in each school building, i.e. lunch duties, state testing

coordination, special education meetings, Response to Intervention, committees, volunteer coordinator, etc. Though each of these tasks is important and necessary, and every faculty member must contribute so that each school runs effectively, too many of these hats being stacked upon the counselors' heads inhibit them from doing the necessary and crucial work of running comprehensive school counseling programs from which students directly benefit. Our current Virginia standard of accreditation §8VAC 20-131-240 is for school counselors to spend a minimum of 60% of our time to counseling of students, though the national standard is a minimum of 80%. One thing school counselors need to do our jobs more effectively is to raise this state bar legislatively so that school counselors can spend 80% or more of their time working with students to help them be successful academically and emotionally so that they can prepare for and successfully pursue their future education and career opportunities. We so value the relationship we have with our legislators taking the time to hear from and listen to those with boots on the ground every day in our schools and the hearts and voices of the students foremost in mind. Thank you for asking those questions and valuing our responses. Thank you for working and advocating for Virginia's kids. Know that we, as school counselors, strive to do the same with passion and perseverance each and every day to help each student reach high and succeed.

Ms. Brett Welch, MA is a professional school counselor and VSCA President-Elect. [V]

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