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**Health Department staff testifies before senate  
on school-based mental health care**

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on K-12 and Michigan Department of Education heard recent testimony from a Health Department of Northwest Michigan staff member and others about the role of school-based health centers to address student mental health needs.

Dr. Natalie Kasiborski, Deputy Health Officer with the health department and secretary of the School-Community Health Alliance Board (SCHA-MI), testified about the health department's partnerships with schools to ensure students receive mental health services.

"We need to make sure students across the state have access to the mental health services they need so they are properly engaged in learning," Kasiborski said.

The Deputy Health Officer for Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet and Otsego counties told lawmakers and state board of education members about the partnership among the health department, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, and local and intermediate school districts, to place masters prepared mental health professionals within schools. She also explained that while schools were closed, telehealth was deployed to ensure access to ongoing counseling, and noted that students face waitlists to obtain vital mental health care services.

In addition, the Senate Subcommittee heard testimony on how more funding for student mental health services will help to better combat the social and emotional effects the coronavirus pandemic has had on children over the past year as they participate in either remote or in-person learning, or a mix of the two. Kasiborski was one of three people testifying on behalf of SCHA-MI on February 5.

**CUTLINE:**

Dr. Natalie Kasiborski, Deputy Health Officer with the Health Department of Northwest Michigan, seated at the center table far right, recently testified before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on K-12 and Michigan Department of Education about the need for school-based mental health services.

*The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties. For more information, visit [nwhealth.org](http://nwhealth.org).*

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