

Hi my name is Selena Hernandez. I'm 20 years old and a former student at Morton East High School and a patient of their health center. I am here today to talk about my experience in the school based clinic at Morton East High School. I started getting services there for treatment of depression and anxiety. And this clinic played a big role for 4 years of my life when I was in high school. Not only did I become a mother at a very young age, but suffered greatly when unfortunately I became involved in a very abusive relationship with the father of my son. I was only 15 at the time trying to finish high school to give my son a better future. But I faced many challenges along the way. For me what helped me overcome these was talking to someone who understood me when I felt like I was alone. I was physically emotionally verbally sexually abused by the father of my son in 2015 and there was a point where I was about to fail all my classes I had suffered from PTSD and depression. My counselor Maria Castillo who is here tonight was literally the only support I had at the time. If it wasn't for her, I would have fallen behind but she advocated for me many times when she would talk to my school dean and councilor to help me get back on my feet. How many of us wouldn't want someone to speak on our behalves when you feel like your whole world is crashing down? There I was 17 years old, a few months from graduation and I was falling behind, because I had made the decision to leave my abusive partner. Which was very difficult because I was traumatized. Maria made a very big impact in my life but it wouldn't have been possible if clinic wasn't in this school. I can't imagine what my life would have been if I would have never met her. And I would have never met her if the clinic wasn't in school. Besides from counseling, my son was also a part of the children's center which is also in the school, and he had gotten sick many times, and he had suffered from bronchitis at one point which meant various doctors' appointments. But because I had my son registered at the school clinic, I didn't have to miss school. And I didn't have to worry about missing assignments. And now here I am today, a high school graduate from class of 2015 and also looking forward to becoming an advocate for domestic violence victims in hope that maybe one day I'll be able to work in this courthouse with some of you guys here today. But none

of my success would have been possible if the clinic had not been in the school. Morton East has about 3500 kids and I know that there are many that will have to miss school and won't reach their full potential if the clinic is no longer in this school. Thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony.