Date 2022

NYS Senator/Legislator

Dear Senator/Legislator: (Insert name of NYS lawmaker who represents your area in NYS)

On behalf of pre-kindergarten, elementary, middle, and high school students in the state of New York, we, the members of the New York State Association of School Nurses (NYSASN), ask that you fund the hiring of school nurses, defined as Professional Registered Nurses, for the upcoming school year as our state continues in the recovery phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. School re-entry continues to bring many challenges for students as they resume classes in the school year 2022-2023. Many students experience mental and behavioral health concerns that may present as physical health issues; they will need support from school nurses. We also know this virus will not disappear when school returns, and school health professionals will have a critical role to play as frontline responders to control further spread of the disease. Now, more than ever, is the time to pass a law that MANDATES a school nurse be required in every school building, every day, all day.

School nurses are front line health care providers, serving as the bridge between the health care and education systems. Whether they are hired by school districts, health departments, or hospitals, school nurses look after the physical and mental health of students in school. School nurses, as public health sentinels, engage school communities, parents, and healthcare providers to promote wellness and improve health outcomes for children. For many children living in or near poverty, the school nurse may be the only health care professional they access regularly. School nurses are essential in infectious disease surveillance, identification and intervention for student physical and mental health concerns, health screenings, school located vaccinations, and immunization compliance efforts. Additionally, children today face more chronic and complex health conditions than ever before. Access to a school nurse is a student equity issue.

Historically children have been the first to show signs of an epidemic and the school nurse has been a case finder of illness. As we look at the 2022-2023 school year that will also coincide with new influenza, the need for additional school nurses is paramount. School nurses support the academic success of students by making sure they are healthy, safe, and ready to learn.

During a crisis such as this, school nurses serve students and families in schools and in communities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, school nurses continue working to check in on students with chronic conditions, either by phone or through telehealth; others provide home visits. Some school nurses collaborate with school staff to ensure that children receive needed meals. Other school nurses serve at COVID-19 testing centers and as contact tracers to support local and state public health departments.

As you and our other state leaders negotiate stimulus packages centered on the COVID-19 pandemic, consider that many school districts do not employ a full-time school nurse in every building as we are not mandated. Many split their time between one or more schools, leaving a number of schools without a full-time nurse. Healthy students learn better. When a school nurse is present to meet student healthcare needs, parents and school administrators know that children and youth can focus on learning.

Thank you for your consideration to address the health, safety, and readiness to learn of students by increasing school nurse positions and making their position mandated in New York State schools. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of assistance or provide you with additional information.

Sincerely,

Your name

Your school district