

January 2020

Nurses for Under-Resourced Schools Everywhere (NURSE) Act

ACTION

The National Association of School Nurses (NASN) urges Congress to pass the Nurses for Under-Resourced Schools Everywhere Act (NURSE) Act, which would recognize the critical role of school nurses in providing students access to quality health care so that they are safe, healthy, and ready to learn. The NURSE Act, S 1362, was introduced by Senator Jon Tester (D-MT) in the Senate and Representative Dina Titus (D-NV) introduced the companion bill in the House of Representatives, HR 2606.

HISTORY

- National data indicates 39 percent of public schools have a school nurse all day, every day, while another 35 percent of schools have a school nurse who works part-time in one or more schools. Wide ratio disparities exist from state to state, within states and school districts, and between urban and rural schools.
- In 2011, the U.S. Census Bureau reported 9.7 percent of children under 19 (7.6 million) were uninsured. For many of our nation's children, the school nurse is the sole provider of access to health care. This makes the role of school nurses even more critical.
- The American Nurses Association has reported that when there is no registered nurse on the school premises, the responsibility to administer the necessary medications and treatments, and to appropriately monitor children's health issues, fall on the shoulders of administrators, educators, and staff, who are ill-prepared to perform these tasks.
- School nurses operate in what some have termed the "Hidden Health Care System."

BACKGROUND

- NASN supports a demonstration grant program to fund school nurses based on Title I designation (free and reduced lunch and breakfast).
- Poverty is frequently an indicator of unmet health needs. All students should be able to have their health needs safely met while in the school setting.
- The current reality is that students have greater healthcare needs than in past generations. Children cannot meet their full potential with unmet health needs.
- School nurses promote wellness and disease prevention and perform early intervention services, such as periodic assessments for vision, hearing, and dental problems, to reduce barriers to learning and address health disparities.
- Today's students face more medically complex conditions and chronic health illnesses – including asthma, diabetes, food allergies, obesity, and mental health and behavioral issues – which require the knowledge, assessment skills, and judgment of a school nurse to provide management of these lifelong conditions.
- School nurses coordinate with families, schools, and providers to connect children to medical homes, which can help improve health outcomes and reduce costs.