



SB 363 AN ACT CONCERNING ASSORTED REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES

Education Committee

March 11, 2024

Dear Chairs Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, Ranking Members Senator Berthel and Representative McCarty, and esteemed members of the Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in *support* of **SB 363 An Act Concerning Assorted Revisions to the Education Statutes, specifically Sec. 3 Addressing Professional Development Orientation for New School Nurses.**

A school nurse is a medical/health professional, supporting health and working in an education setting. It requires a scope of practice and competencies that is very different from other roles and settings. Her role requires general nursing knowledge, expertise as a public health nurse, pediatric nurse, community nurse, and knowledge of the state educational system, regulations, and the intersection of federal and state laws in the care of children with special health care needs, and disabilities.

New nurses may find themselves unprepared for their role without a proper orientation, causing them to feel anxious, and not ready to care for students properly, leading to attrition.” (Smoothing the Way into School Nursing Practice, Stacey Tsai et al, NASN Sch Nurse, 2022 Jul.)

Requiring a new school nurse orientation will support:

- Attainment of special knowledge and skills to implement their role with success, including knowledge of the intersection of health and complex federal and state education laws
- Attracting and retaining nurses

A new school nurse orientation exists and has the capacity to provide this education.

Attainment of special knowledge and skills to implement their role with success

An orientation supports the transition of new (to the role) school nurses to begin to understand the breadth and depth of the role, required activities, and resources available to support their questions and concerns.



School nurses are not different than any other nurse that work in an emergency room, labor and delivery, or other specialty areas. They require an orientation period and nursing support to transition to the role. All nurses pass a nursing licensure exam that tests foundational nursing knowledge. The profession is built upon competencies. Nurses work through professional development, training, coaching, orientation, etc. to apply their general knowledge and build competency in different specialty areas and practice settings.

Increasingly the healthcare required in schools, complicated educational laws around special education, confidentiality, and children's health and mental health needs are increasing, and impact their success in the educational setting.

We completed a 2023 winter orientation for new school nurses. Our evaluation asked nurses how they will use this training in their professional role:

- This course has given me the confidence to fully help students and families
- I will use the knowledge to properly implement review of immunization, training of unlicensed assistive personnel with medication administration, and so much more.
- I have more confidence in my role
- More aware of all that is involved in school nursing and my responsibilities
- I have learned so much about policy and procedures related to my position

Nursing Workforce Attraction and Retention

As noted above, an orientation supports the nurse so they are prepared to implement their role with confidence of what is expected of them, and access and understanding of how to navigate a school system, board of education policies, and identify and work with the healthcare team in the school and community. Ultimately, giving every school access to a school nurse that can be helpful from the start, and not wait years to learn the role.

Nurse orientation programs are supported across the country in all specialty areas. As health professionals nurses bring a foundational knowledge to new roles and specialty areas. School nursing is a distinct role, with their own competencies. Nurses new to the role need to be introduced to the breadth and depth of their position.

When nurses feel supported, and understand where they work, they are more likely to stay.

Impact on Health Disparities and Advancing Equity

School nurses work with students and families in their neighborhoods see the impact of social determinates, and help families navigate the challenges, and work to increase protective factors for students and families, through their support and assistance. As trusted members of the education and health community school nurses understand and address disparities in every day health. An orientation will encourage nurses to embrace their knowledge and expertise in



this area, and contribute to conversations addressing disparities and advancing health equity in the community they work.

The [Institute of Medicine Future of Nursing 2020-2030](#) embraces the important role of the school nurse in addressing health disparities in the community, and acting as a change agent.

Connecticut is well positioned

Platform to provide training: The CT Nurses Association has worked with CSDE and the Association of School Nurses of Connecticut to provide ongoing professional development for nurses. We have provided 1-2 new school nurse orientation a year for the past 7 years. Our model incorporates face to face learning as well as access to online modules. This supports flexibility for the nurse and the district. CT is ready to prepare school nurses that embrace the full breadth and depth of their role, so they can embrace their potential and best support the outcomes for our children.

Competencies: CT State Department of Education created school nurse competencies, these will drive the orientation training and ongoing professional development of school nurses. They align with the national school nurse competencies.

Please support sec. 3 that requires new school nurses to attend a school nurse orientation. This will support all children, and those most vulnerable children, and their communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kimberly Sandor".

Kim Sandor, MSN, RN, FNP
Executive Director
Connecticut Nurses' Association