



VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL NURSES, INC.
P.O. BOX 28313, RICHMOND, VA 23228

October 10, 2012

Ms. Anne D. Wescott
Assistant Superintendent for Policy and Communications
Virginia Department of Education
PO Box 2120
Richmond, VA 23218-2120

Dear Ms. Wescott and Board of Education Members,

I am Deborah Zeller, a registered nurse and President of the Virginia Association of School Nurses. I speak on behalf of my school nursing colleagues. Thank you for conducting this hearing on the Standards of Quality and providing the opportunity to speak.

Today, as many as 18% of students have chronic health conditions that may require the skilled support of a school nurse. This is due to an increase in the prevalence of health issues like asthma and life threatening allergies. The board is asked to amend the Standards of Quality to fund the staffing of a registered school nurse in every school building every day. This support will allow teachers to teach and enable students to be healthy, in school, and ready to learn.

The school nurse helps students to stay healthy and safe while reducing barriers to learning, so that children can attend class and achieve academically. School nurses provide direct care that may involve administering medication through an intravenous line, caring for a child with a tracheostomy, or teaching a child with asthma or diabetes to manage their medication. The registered nurse (RN) assesses students, develops individualized care plans, and coordinates services. Should a medical emergency arise, the RN has the education and judgment to recognize the subtleties of potentially life threatening situations. In addition, the school nurse is able to assess potentially infectious conditions like MRSA, shingles, or whooping cough. Professional school nurses are able to effectively intervene to save lives, minimize injuries, prevent disabilities, and control infectious outbreaks.

According to the National Association of School Nurses, about 6% of all school-aged children have illness or injury that results in more than 11 missed school days. Absenteeism contributes to lower graduation rates. School nurses make a positive difference in students' school attendance and readiness to learn. The National Association of School Nurses recommends providing one school nurse for every 750 healthy students but Virginia is not meeting this goal. We average one school nurse for just under 1,000 students. That places us 24th in the nation with this ratio (National Association of School Nurses, 2011).

The board is asked to amend the Standards of Quality to provide for funded staffing of a registered school nurse in every school building every day. This support will allow teachers to teach and enable students to be healthy, safe, and in school, ready to learn. Every child deserves a school nurse.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deborah Zeller".

Deborah Zeller, MSN, BSN, RN, National Certified School Nurse
President