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Association of School Nurses of Connecticut

HB 6687, "AAC Minor Revisions to the Education Statutes"

Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, Members of Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Association of School Nurses in support of **HB 6687, "Minor Revisions to the Education Statutes"**.

A School Nurse Task Force convened in 2008 with Representative Sayers, Senator Handley, Representative Carson and various stakeholders. Recommendations from this Task Force are in Section 5 of **HB6687, "Increased Qualifications for School Nurses."**

Since 1982, there has been no change in qualifications required for school nurses in Connecticut. However, over those 27 years, there have been rapid changes in health care and the children in school. The school nurse has become a specialist.

There is no cost attached to this legislation; nor should increasing qualifications be construed as an "unfunded mandate." School nursing services are already required in Connecticut. School nurses are employed by Boards of Education and are also employed by local Public Health Departments, such as in New Haven, Milford, and Fairfield. Salaries are negotiable.

A 2008 State Department of Education Survey indicates about half of school nurses already have a bachelor's degree; many have master's; some have doctorates. School nurses participate in health education, HUSKY outreach, child abuse, 504's, PPT's, school safety, crisis management, indoor air quality, AED training, and wellness; issues you legislate for. School nurses are first line responders and for many children their only access to medical care and treatment. In an unstable economy, this is precisely the time to ensure that every child has access to quality health care in school.

According to the CDC, "the academic success of America's youth is strongly linked with their health." Despite these linkages, education and health are treated as separate."

Senator Fleischmann, you expanded after-school programs, were instrumental in increased funding for special education, and helped pass one of the nation's strongest nutrition bills. You legislated to sue for failure to fund No Child Left Behind. You drafted legislation for Early Childhood. All of which involves the

school nurse. Senator Fleischmann, thank you for your commitment to children and school nurses. Thank you for making the connection.

Senator Gaffey, you helped improve school readiness programs. You received national recognition for your initiatives on No Child Left Behind. NCLB requires teachers to be "highly qualified". We should expect no less for school nurses.

Senator Gaffey, you and I met for the first time in 1999 when legislators, Education and Public Health, nurses came together on this same issue. At that time, you directed us to begin the process of improving qualifications for school nurses. It has been 10 years, Senator Gaffey, and we meet again with the same goal. I thanked you then and we thank you now for your support on this important decision.