

**RAISED BILL 929: AN ACT CONCERNING THE QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS OF SCHOOL NURSES**

The State Department of Education (CSDE) supports S.B. No. 929, *An Act Concerning the Qualification Requirements of School Nurses* in the interest of ensuring a high level of expertise by those employed as professional school nurses, with minor revisions.

The current regulations for the qualifications of school nurses requires only one year of experience as a registered nurse within the past five years; 10 hours of continuing education every two years; and licensure as a registered nurse with 12 academic credits, 18 continuing education units or 180 workshop hours.

This bill seeks to direct the State Board of Education to develop and adopt regulations increasing the qualifications of school nurses, by July 1, 2011 (note: this timeline is unrealistic; the CSDE could develop and adopt these new regulations on or before July 1, 2012)

The role and practice of the school nurse has changed significantly over the last decade. Not only has the health needs of the students increased, but research also has shown the ability to learn at school is directly related to status of the student's health. School nurses have a vital role in assisting students achieve academically.

Expectations for preparation of school nurses (registered nurses) have evolved within the context of the larger nursing profession. Today, those who become registered nurses (RNs) attend a hospital program where they receive a diploma, a community college where they receive an associate degree, or a university where they receive a baccalaureate degree. Baccalaureate of Science (BS) Degree programs prepare nurses to function in less structured environments and to intervene and respond in situations that are not routine and predictable. The BS nurses' assessment skills are broader than just the technical aspects of nursing care performed by the Associate Degree nurses and these BS registered nurses often have limited supervision available and require the ability to function autonomously. School nurses are in settings with limited supervision, often alone and functioning autonomously; therefore, requiring a baccalaureate degree or an associate degree with additional course work is in line with their role.

Given the level of autonomy in which school nurses practice, it is essential that nurses who enter this specialty are afforded prior nursing experience so that the problem solving skills, assessment skills, leadership and health interventions are safely and appropriately provided and practiced in the school environment. In addition to assure continuing competence in the field upon entry, continuing education is essential. Ongoing continuing education expands and updates knowledge and practice to meet the increasing and ever-changing demands and expectations of the profession and of the education community and is aligned with what is expected of the certified educational staff within schools.

Becoming certified by the National Board of Certification for School Nurses implies a higher level of expertise. Through certification, the school nurse must demonstrate a nationally accepted expert knowledge base for the practice of school nursing. This certification, however, is limited to school nurses with a baccalaureate degree and five years of school nursing experience so not all school nurses upon hire will be eligible to become immediately certified. (Suggested technical change to include "if and when eligible" based on required experience and education necessary to become certified).

6318  
Education Committee  
February 23, 2011

The CSDE is also sensitive to the fiscal challenges that face Connecticut school districts and the committee should be aware that this bill would increase the cost of education for local school districts. However, quality services that are being provided by school nurses to students and staff should be assured through appropriate education, licensure, and certification. Based on recent survey data, almost half of all Connecticut school nurses already hold a bachelor of science in nursing degree as well as advanced degrees including Master of Science in Nursing or Master of Art in Education. Since this bill will impact future school nurses and more than half already hold a BS or higher degree, the fiscal impact on Connecticut school districts will be incremental as they replace school nurses through attrition.

Again, CSDE strongly supports S.B. No. 929, *An Act Concerning the Qualification Requirements of School Nurses* in the interest of ensuring a high level of expertise by those employed as professional school nurses.

**RAISED BILL 6318: AN ACT CONCERNING DONATIONS OF EQUIPMENT TO THE  
REGIONAL VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOL SYSTEM**

The State Department of Education (CSDE) supports H.B. No. 6318, *AAC Donations of Equipment to the Regional Vocational-Technical School System*, to indemnify any person who makes a donation of equipment to the regional vocational-technical school system.

This bill hugely benefits the CT Technical High School System (CTHSS) and any corporate donor seeking to donate to the CTHSS (especially where the items to be donated are larger and of greater dollar value). Pratt and Whitney jet engines and automobile donations are great examples of these types of donations used in CTHSS' programs for instructional purposes only.

There have been issues in the past that have unfortunately prevented CTHSS from accepting these types of donations because as an agency of a sovereign state CSDE was not allowed to indemnify persons who made a donation of equipment to CTHSS. This prevented CTHS students from utilizing the most advanced technologies and equipment to acquire the latest skills needed to prepare them in their trade.

Therefore, CSDE and the CTHSS are in full support of H.B. No. 6318, as the language of this bill may accelerate such donations.