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Testimony on Raised Bill 929
AAC THE QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENT OF SCHOOL NURSES

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and Members of the Education Committee,

I am a registered nurse, and advanced practice registered nurse as well as a nationally certified school nurse. I have been a school nurse since 1982 and certainly agree that the school nurse qualifications that have been in place since that time need to be revised. The difficulty with this bill as it is written is that it is not possible to meet the requirements of this bill as it is written. I would like to propose alternate language and explain why.

(1) Each local or regional board of education shall appoint one or more school nurses or nurse practitioners. Such school nurses and nurse practitioners appointed by such boards shall be qualified pursuant to regulations adopted in accordance with the provisions of chapter 54 by the State Board of Education in consultation with the Department of Public Health. On and after July 1, 2011, such regulations shall require that each school nurse participates in at least fifteen hours of continuing education annually and maintains a valid registered nursing license in this state, and for any person not qualified as a school nurse prior to July 1, 2011, such regulations shall require that such person seeking to be qualified as a school nurse (A) is certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation, (B) has at least two years of full-time working experience as a registered nurse during the five-year period immediately prior to the date of employment as a school nurse, (C) has a baccalaureate degree with a concentration in nursing or other health-related field, such as public health or health education, or has a diploma or associate degree in nursing and at least fifteen academic credits from a licensed or accredited institution of higher education in nursing-related subject areas, and obtains a baccalaureate degree within 5 years of hire as a school nurse and (D) becomes certified as a school nurse by the National Board for Certification of School Nurses within two years of becoming eligible, and/or obtains a master's degree in nursing or a related health or education area.

I suggest these changes for the following reasons:

- Inserting the word registered before nursing license assures understanding that the school nurse must by statute be a registered nurse.
- While it is preferable that a school nurse have a baccalaureate degree, if one is hired with a diploma or associate degree they should eventually obtain a baccalaureate degree as that is the level that is necessary for the autonomous practice of a school nurse (almost 50 % of current school nurses currently have a baccalaureate in nursing (BSN)).
- National certification as a school nurse is not an entry level credential, but a credential that shows expertise. Sitting for the school nurse certification exam requires a baccalaureate degree and guidelines suggest that the applicant has at least three years experience as a school nurse to successfully sit for the exam.

- Ideally a school nurse will obtain a master's degree in nursing or a health or education related field in order to have the skills to meet the challenges of balancing the needs of the complicated combined health and education arenas.

I would like you to consider passing this bill with the suggested changes. Research shows that healthy children learn better, qualified school nurses are a huge part of keeping students healthy. Accepting qualifications that are 29 years old in the 21st century is a travesty. There is no cost attached to this bill, nor should approval of this bill be considered an unfunded mandate. Please consider the health and safety of the students of Connecticut when deliberating this bill.