



TESTIMONY OF
VERNA BERNARD-JONES, MS, RN, NCSN
PRESIDENT, HARTFORD SCHOOL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS, AFT LOCAL 1018 A/B, AFL-CIO
MEMBER, AFT CONNECTICUT HEALTHCARE COUNCIL
Co-Chair School Nurse Advisory Council

Public Health Committee
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SB 224

AN ACT CONCERNING RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SCHOOL NURSE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Good Day Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and members of the Public Health Committee. I am Verna Bernard-Jones, a school nurse at West Middle School in Hartford. I'm also President of the Hartford Federation of Teachers Health Professionals, a local union representing 65 school nurses and health professionals employed in the Hartford school district. I am writing testimony in support of SB 224.

Thank you for establishing the School Nurse Advisory Council that has allowed me the opportunity to work with the diverse members of the Council who represents school health as well as education. Throughout our meetings, which began at the end of last summer and wrapped up in January 2014, members recognized the critical role School Nurses play in keeping kids healthy and successful in school. We all acknowledge the fact that School Nurses manage increasingly complex medical conditions as well as chronic physical and mental health problems. This is why we recommend that:

- **In addition to the professional development requirements already specified by state statute, all new school nurses must complete the CSDE school nurse orientation program within one year of hire.**

The "Future of Nursing" (<http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2010/The-Future-of-Nursing-Leading-Change-advancing-Health/Report-Brief-Education.aspx>), a two year initiative done by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), states " ...as patients needs and care environment become more complex, nurses need to attain requisite competencies to deliver high quality care." The new School Nurse orientation offered by Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and Association of School Nurses of Connecticut (ASNC) is an essential step for school nurses in attaining these competencies.

As a school nurse for more than 18 years working with a school population of close to 800 students, I must urge you to support the Advisory Council's recommendation regarding school nurse staffing that:

- **Every district maintain a staffing ratio of qualified school nurses to students, consistent with the health care needs of its students, at a level of not less than one qualified school nurse to 750 students.**

While it is often the case that the majority of the student population is healthy and is seen only for minor complaints there is a percentage of students with very complex medical problems. For example, in one school in my district with a student population of 900 with a single nurse, there are two insulin dependent diabetics who require blood glucose checks three or more times per day, as well as carbohydrate calculation and insulin administration at these times. In addition, there is a student with a severe seizure disorder that requires the administration of Diastat at least once per week and sometimes daily (the school nurse carries a special phone just for this student). Another student needs urinary catheterization twice per day and another student needs gastrostomy tube feeding. The lone School Nurse sees an average of 75 students per day, including students with asthma, food allergies, ADD/ADHD, and medication administration. This is in addition to the state mandated health screenings for all students, (Vision, hearing & scoliosis) as well as the daily assessment, interventions and health teaching she does for students and staff.

The National Association of School Nurses, in a position statement on caseload assignment in 2008, noted that 16% of the nation's 52 million school children have chronic physical, emotional or other health problems. This is why NASN recommends the utilization of a caseload formulation based on student acuity levels:

1:750 for student in the general population, 1:225 for student requiring daily skilled nursing care and intervention and 1:125 for students with complex health need and 1:1 for students who require daily continuous professional nursing service.

School Nurses want students in the classroom achieving academic success. Please support us in this endeavor by supporting the recommendations of the School Nurse Advisory Council. Please support SB 224.

Thank you.