



Testimony for the Indiana Board of Education

RE: Elimination of Registered Nurses to Student Ratios

October 22, 2010

My name is Ernest Klein. I am the Executive Director of the Indiana State Nurses Association (ISNA) and am speaking on behalf of the Association. The ISNA has been representing nurses and advocating for the healthcare of Indiana's citizens for over 100 years.

I am here to speak in opposition to the proposed change to 511 IAC 4-1.5-2-(b)-(4) Personnel, which would eliminate the requirement that there be one registered nurse for every 750 students.

As it is well-documented there is a negative effect of health-related conditions on a child's academic success. There is also a growing body of research highlighting the positive effect of children's food health on academic potential. Several of these studies specifically observe the correlation of a school nurse's availability to students to better attendance and subsequent academic performance. For example, studies have shown the following:

- Students have better performance and attendance when attending a school with a full-time school nurse,
- Decreased absence due to asthma was correlated with full-time nursing services, and
- General positive influences on health and disease management were associated with the involvement of a school nurse.

These data and emerging research trends suggest that all children would benefit by receiving the support and services of a professional school nurse to optimize their safety, well-being and capacity for learning.

The evidence demonstrating the wisdom and necessity of a school nurse available for students and staff alike is compelling.

Given that a quarter of the US population is under age 18, that most of those children and youth are school-aged, and that they are generally in school from 8am to 4pm five days each week, it is remarkable how low a priority their health care appears to receive.

In order to achieve the benefits for all children, several health and education organizations have endorsed a ratio of one school nurse to 750 students, with smaller numbers of students as they are increasingly impacted by their various physical and mental health conditions. ISNA and the American Nurses Association support this recommendation, with the ultimate goal of having at least one school nurse assigned to every school.

Thank you for opportunity to provide testimony. I will be glad to answer any questions.



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RE: Elimination of BSN requirement for a RN coordinator

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My name is Ernest Klein. I am the Executive Director of the Indiana State Nurses Association (ISNA) and am speaking on behalf of the Association. The ISNA has been representing nurses and advocating for the healthcare of Indiana's citizens for over 100 years.

I am here to speak in opposition to the proposed change to 511 IAC 4-1.5-6 Health Services which would eliminate the requirement that the registered nurse who coordinates health services must have a bachelor of science in nursing.

Students' health needs must be addressed in schools to achieve optimum learning. ISNA supports school health which best protects the fundamental public health and education priority of our nation's children. It requires the cooperation and participation of healthcare professionals, teachers, school administrators and staff, students, families, and the community.

The prevalence and complexity of children's health problems affect every classroom. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) writes that "chronic diseases and other chronic health conditions are estimated to occur in 20% to 30% of the children and adolescents in this county. Seven to eight percent of children aged 5 to 17 have activity limitations due to one or more chronic health conditions."

The necessity of a school nurses as the coordinating and collaborating leader within this system is further highlighted by the growing special health needs of children in the classroom, as well as the more traditional school health services conventionally associated with school nursing. Federal statues and judicial rulings have opened the classroom doors to many students with challenging health conditions and special educational needs who might have previously been assigned to institutions or home tutoring.

The school nurse serves as the coordinator of care, health information and education, and resources to take the best advantage of school's unique position in addressing student' safety and health care needs. As with any professional registered nurse, the school nurse's role also includes direct care, as well as delegating health care activities to other (both healthcare and non-healthcare) personnel. These roles and concepts about public health and leadership and management are introduced at the baccalaureate level in nursing schools. Ideally, the school nurse coordinator of health services should be prepared at the Masters level – just as teachers are expected to have a graduate degree.

It is critical that the requirement for the registered nurse health coordinator remain, at a minimum, a registered nurse with a Baccalaureate of Science in Nursing. Thank you for opportunity to provide testimony. I will be glad to answer any questions.