

To: Senate Committee on Education
Chair, Senator Roblan
Vice-Chair, Senator Knopp
Member, Senator Baertschiger, Jr
Member, Senator Beyer
Member, Senator Gelser
Member, Senator Hass
Member, Senator Kruse

Regarding: HB 2972

05/21/2015

Submitted Testimony of Nina Fekaris, RN, MS, BSN, NCSN
School Nurse with the Beaverton School District
President-Elect Designee for the National Association of School Nurses

School nurses support dental health, the importance of establishing a dental home, screening for dental disease and access to treatment and preventative dental services. We want our students to have healthy mouths. We understand that a child sitting in class with dental pain will not be able to learn or fully access their education.

Please consider these two points when looking at this proposed legislation.

1.) I have been a practicing school nurse for the last 27 years. I have a great breadth of knowledge when providing health services to our students. I can look in a mouth and see advanced dental decay and disease. I cannot however, look into a mouth and see the beginning of decay, or spot areas of concern. If school nurses are being assigned the additional duty of providing dental screening, then a School Nurse Dental Screening educational program needs to be developed and required for school nurses assuming this new role. Even though many of my students have established dental homes, I know I will be asked to look into many mouths, and I want to do the best possible screening I can. As a part of this training, standardized tools/equipment needed to perform the screening need to be provided.

When the vision screening legislation was put into law, there were no standards developed regarding procedure and equipment. When I attended a national presentation on appropriate school vision screening, I was very surprised to find out that the vision charts my school district had been using for years were not approved and did not provide an accurate reflection of visual acuity. I believe years of 'miss-screening' could have been prevented if the Department of Education had developed standardized guidelines and procedures around vision screening.

2.) Another aspect of this legislation includes providing parents/ guardians with the following information: the dental screening, further examinations or necessary treatments, and preventative care, including fluoride varnish, sealants and daily brushing and flossing. This information also needs to be standardized across the State.

I participated in the development and implementation of process of gathering numbers of students with diabetes and the creation of the Childhood Diabetes Database Registry within the Public Health Division. This was as a result of legislation that was put into law in 2007. It was standardized across the State and all school nurses participated in the collection of that data in a uniform way. Unlike the implementation of the vision screening program, where there was no standardized screening recommendations, trainings or guidance. In fact today, on our school nurse list serve, vision screening questions still rank in the top 5 of all questions asked by school nurses to school nurses. I would like to see this avoided if we can.

I believe ALL children in Oregon have the right to have a healthy mouth. All children need to have an appropriate dental screening and have the opportunity to establish with a dental home. School nurses in Oregon support dental health. How this legislation will be implemented will make the difference between another unfunded mandated dumped on the school nurse to figure out, or, a stellar program that adequately serves the needs of our children.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. Please contact me if you would like more information.

Sincerely,

Nina Fekaris, RN, NCSN
School Nurse
503-591-4133
nina_fekaris@beaverton.k12.or.us