

June 9, 2015

Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services:
Co chairs: Senator Alan Bates and Representative Nancy Nathanson
Members: Representative Deborah Boone, Representative Alissa Keny-Guyer,
Representative Andy Olson, Representative Duane Stark, Senator Elizabeth Steiner
Hayward and Senator Jackie Winters

RE: Support of SB 698

From: Kim Bartholomew, Oregon Director - National Association of School Nurses
and Beaverton School District Nurse

I am here today to offer strong support for SB 698. This bill creates the position of the State School Nurse consultant in the Oregon Health Authority. This position would offer so much for both students and districts throughout the state. We currently have no collective voice in the state. There is no school nurse at ODE.

I reached out to NASSNC, the National Association of State School Nurse Consultants to learn more about the position of school nurse consultant nationally. To my surprise, I found that nearly every state has a school nurse consultant. Oregon prides itself in how forward thinking we are, yet we do not have this state position.

When I contacted a member of NASSNC to discuss the potential of Oregon creating such a position, I very quickly received supportive emails from several nurse consultants in other states including Hawaii, Missouri, Wisconsin, and Delaware. The individual members were most supportive of our legislation because they see the value in having a voice for school nurses on the state level. They see firsthand how the state school nurse consultant can provide technical leadership, clinical consultation, liaison, professional expertise, and provide advocacy for school nurses students and families. The consultant will also monitor, interpret and disseminate information. Currently there is no standardization in our professional practice in Oregon. Practice varies tremendously throughout the state and is a great disservice to our students. We currently have no way to provide evidence based information to school nurses. School nurse consultant would provide this.

Another brilliant aspect of SB 698 is the creation of a 14 member task force to explore alternative funding sources for school nurses, recommend sustainable funding sources to cover the cost of the currently mandated and unfunded school health screenings, the creation of standards of school nursing practice and the creation of a coordinated school health services model.

The OHA mission statement is helping people and communities achieve optimum physical, mental and social well being through partnerships, prevention and access to quality, affordable health care. NASN vision is to lead the transformation of school health and our mission is to advance school nurse practice to keep students healthy safe and ready to learn. Our goals and mission are completely in line with

the mission of OHA and I believe that we would bring fresh new ideas to the table. Who better to move Oregon forward than a school nurse as a part of the OHA's Coordinated school health program? Youth and adolescents spend most of their time in school and the school nurse is there to advocate.

Here is a relevant quote from the OHA website:

“There is a strong, well-established link between health and learning. Students’ health impacts attendance, test scores and the ability to pay attention in class. Emotional, social and physical health problems can become barriers to learning making it difficult for students to be academically or behaviorally successful in school. Schools are also workplaces that can support the well-being of teachers, staff, and visitors” Again, this is what school nurses do on a daily basis. We are the ones with access to all of these people. We need a collective voice to speak for students, our staff, families and us.

Senators and Representatives, I implore you to pass SB 698 out of this committee and send it to the floor for a vote.