



Testimony of Bernadette Mazurek Melnyk, PhD, APRN-CNP, FAANP, FNAP, FAAN
Vice President for Health Promotion
University Chief Wellness Officer

Dean and Helene Fuld Health Trust Professor of Evidence-Based Practice, College of Nursing
Professor of Pediatrics & Psychiatry, College of Medicine
Executive Director, The Helene Fuld Health Trust National Institute for EBP

Senate Finance Committee
HB 110
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Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for allowing me to submit a written statement regarding HB 110.

As you deliberate on amendments to the pending state biennial budget legislation, I respectfully ask you to include an amendment to reinstate language requiring school nurses to obtain a Pupil Services License from the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), in addition to earning a RN license, in order to practice as a school nurse. This requirement was removed by HB 442, signed into law on December 22, 2020 and effective April 12, 2021. While I understand the policy enacted in HB 442 was designed to streamline licensure processes in the state, the school nursing licensure change will have unintended negative consequences for our students. Reinstatement of this requirement will protect the health, safety, and academic success of school children across the state of Ohio.

The following are key reasons the reinstatement of the prior law is necessary.

The practice of School Nursing requires specialty preparation beyond the pre-licensure program of study. Baccalaureate nursing programs prepare students for a generalist, not a specialty, role as noted below:

- School Nursing is a specialized practice with its own scope and standards of practice (ANA & NASN, 2017) requiring specific educational preparation that extends beyond a baccalaureate degree to practice independently in a non-traditional health care setting.
- The Ohio Board of Regents and the Ohio Department of Education approved the 2010 [Ohio Educator Licensure Standards for School Nurse Professional Pupil Services Licensure](#) designed to guide approved programs to prepare RNs with a baccalaureate degree for the specialty practice of school nursing in Ohio schools. However, with the elimination of this preparation, as cited in HB 442, nurses working in the schools will not be able to meet the expected standards (i.e., the minimal level of expected performance) to safeguard Ohio children.
- Basic preparation for an RN is regulated by the State Boards of Nursing and in Ohio this is identified under Ohio Rev. Code 4723-5. The standards are based on pre-licensure programs with curricula established in baccalaureate degree, associate degree or diploma programs. The Ohio Board of Nursing does not require a baccalaureate in nursing nor is there a requirement to include curricula specific to School Nurse practice in pre-licensure preparation.

- Nurses licensed in the State of Ohio may have attended programs that were baccalaureate degree, associate degree, or diploma programs. The baccalaureate completion programs were designed to prepare nurses at a generalist level based as an extension of education needed from associate or diploma to baccalaureate. Those standards are based on a generalist preparation and do not address School Nurse practice or competency.
- Educational preparation for nursing varies greatly across the nation for baccalaureate degree, associate degree and diploma programs and those nursing programs may or may not be accredited by the three accrediting bodies in the United States - Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), Commission for Nursing Education Accreditation (CNEA), or Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN). This creates a vast difference in educational preparation and lack of standardization if the program in which the student attended for baccalaureate preparation was not accredited.

Undergraduate education does not prepare students with the knowledge, skills and dispositions to provide comprehensive school health care. The following areas needed for competent school nurse practice are **not** included and emphasized in nursing pre-licensure programs:

- A comprehensive foundation of the knowledge, skills and dispositions to work in an educational setting without the structure that nurses in acute care settings have to support their practice.
- Specifics about the challenges encompassing the interplay of child health, development and learning, health management within school systems, educational law related to health services, collaboration related to student evaluation and intervention services, leadership, and required health education are not topics or experiences covered in accredited nursing programs in Ohio, because these are specialty practice areas appropriate for post-baccalaureate RNs.
- The laws and practices specific to working in the school setting.
- The opportunity to collaborate and work on the interprofessional school support teams.
- Experiences to be “leaders who bridge health care and education, provide care coordination, advocate for quality student-centered care, and collaborate to design systems that allow individuals and communities to develop their full potential” ([NASN Board of Directors, 2017](#)).
- A supervised field experience in the school setting that requires meeting the standards outlined in the ANA & NASN (2017) School Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice and the Ohio Educator Licensure [Standards for School Nurse Professional Pupil Services Licensure](#) (2010).

Inadequate requirements for role function: The requirements for eligibility to apply for an ODE registration as a School Nurse are inadequate for the expectations of performance of School Nursing according to state and national standards. The following are examples to illustrate this point:

- There is no requirement for nursing experience prior to completing the registration process for ODE registration as a School Nurse which is contrary to Ohio Educator Standards for professional school practice.
- RNs with the ODE registration as a School Nurse will lack the essential skills and content knowledge needed to ensure the health and safety of students and the school community. In addition, there has been no opportunity to determine if they possess the appropriate dispositions to advance health care for the vulnerable and often underserved population of children in grades K-12 throughout the state.

Legal and Liability Concerns: the ODE registration as a School Nurse for RNs to provide school health services is not consistent with existing Ohio Laws according to the following explanations:

- Ohio Rev. Code § 4723-4-06 Standards of nursing practice promoting patient safety state: “(O) When nursing practice, as set forth in section [4723.01](#) of the Revised Code, is supervised or evaluated:(1) Only a registered nurse shall supervise or evaluate the practice of nursing, as set

forth in Chapter 4723 of the Revised Code and the rules of the board, performed by other registered nurses and licensed practical nurses.” This means that there is a significant risk of having nurses in the school setting not only unprepared for the practice of nursing but also having a system in place where school administrators are assigned to evaluate the practice performance of nurses who have not been prepared to practice according to the standards of school nursing practice. The potential for school district liability is high when both parties are performing outside their scope of practice. A RN who has completed an approved program of preparation for the ODE School Nurse License has been prepared with skills to address and advocate for appropriate and affordable supervision that is in compliance with 4723-4-06 reducing the risk for local education agency (LEA) liability.

- Many nurses in Ohio schools are hired and supervised by non-nurses. This does not allow for the critical analysis of nursing experience prior to hiring or supervision of nursing practice after hiring for the nurses with an ODE registration as a School Nurse.
- Many districts employ just one nurse for the entire school district, regardless of enrollment numbers. Districts employing an RN who is “registered” with ODE, will have no requirement or expectation for formal training in school health services delivery prior to the position and no licensed school nurse to mentor them to the role and expectations for the position. This is a liability for the RN and school district and creates a safety concern in the care of students.

Expected Outcome Considerations: Expected and documented outcomes of the presence of appropriately prepared School Nurses demand that Ohio continue to be a leader in advancing student health and learning outcomes.

- Ohio and national data from the [National School Health Data Set: Every Student Counts](#) demonstrate student health and academic outcomes improve with a Professional (licensed) School Nurse. Students have improved attendance rates and increased seat time in the classroom when an ODE licensed School Nurse is providing services in the school, when compared to RNs without the ODE license, Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN), and Unlicensed Assistive Personnel (UAP), such as secretaries or health aids.
- RN’s who obtains ODE registration as a School Nurse will have a gap in the education needed to fulfill the role of the School Nurse. They will also lack the professional oversight by university faculty which ensures their competence in practice and meeting the Ohio Educator and the School Nurse standards.

In closing, the new ODE registration has the unintended consequence of leaving the health and safety of the children in Ohio schools in jeopardy. Professional standards serve a purpose, as do licensure and certification. We are asking you to reconsider licensure to protect the health and safety of Ohio’s students and promote the professional standards for which the licensed School Nurse stands. School nurses must have an ODE Pupil Services license to be recognized for having the knowledge, skills and dispositions considered essential for the highly qualified School Nurse and the right choice to oversee the overall health and well-being among children in Ohio schools. The licensed School Nurse, the RN with a baccalaureate degree who has completed an approved program of study in school nursing, has the potential to decrease further disparities in health and education amongst vulnerable children and to increase health and educational outcomes for all of Ohio’s children.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.