



136th General Assembly Regular Session H.B. No. 561 2025-2026

The Ohio Association of School Nurses (OASN) has several concerns regarding House Bill 561. As written, this bill will negatively impact evidence based public health protections that help prevent outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases in schools and childcare settings. We agree with the position statement of the immunization coalition that has been submitted. We urge you to oppose this legislation.

School nurses work tirelessly to monitor vaccine data of students in school, assure data on immunization records in schools are accurate, reach out to parents and families of children who are not fully vaccinated, and provide information, support and referrals to vaccine accessibility in order to assist parents in making an informed choice and access to health care regarding immunization. A system for parent choice in the immunization process for their children already exists. School nurses are on the front-lines of this system, providing evidence-based education and user-friendly forms and processes for parents who choose to exempt their children from school required immunizations. Parents trust school nurses to support the health and well-being of their child, and support for choice of or access to immunizations is no exception.

HB 561 weakens the ability of schools to protect and promote children's health in several ways

1. Removing vaccine requirements

- a. Parents often equate requirements with importance and when vaccines are not required, are viewed as not important.
- b. Removing Hepatitis B from childcare requirements- Evidence has shown that Hepatitis B vaccination has significantly reduced chronic Hepatitis B disease in children. In a childcare setting, where transmission of Hepatitis B through close contact, shared items, and potential exposure to body fluids is heightened, removal of the requirement has the potential to increase a preventable chronic disease for our most vulnerable population.

2. Limiting temporary exclusion of unvaccinated children during outbreaks

- a. The language of HB 561 does not address students who have a vaccine preventable disease, are in a prodromal phase and thus cannot be identified as either having "contracted" or are "infected" but are contagious. The prodromal phase is characterized by mild symptoms common to many illnesses e.g. a runny nose, low grade fever or feeling of being tired, but in some children these prodromal symptoms may not appear at all.
- b. Students who are not immunized against a disease during an epidemic or outbreak, but are exposed, and allowed to stay in school, may very well be in the prodromal stage and spread the disease to others, thus limiting the school's ability to prevent spread of disease and keep outbreaks small and manageable. School nurses work closely with their local health departments to determine exposure and exclusion in order to stop the chain of transmission and protect other students and staff.
- c. Limiting temporary exclusion for unvaccinated children during outbreaks puts more children at risk for disease, disability and death.

3. Informed choice opportunities

- a. A parent provided written statement declining to have their child immunized for reasons of conscience, including religious convictions, already exists in the original bill and official exemption forms are not required, however, exemption forms from school districts or the Ohio Department of Health do make it easier for parents to complete and submit.
- b. Often parents tell school nurses that they don't have the time or resources to vaccinate at this time and thus request exemption, when in many cases, school nurses can link parents with resources to have their child immunized, especially in school-based vaccine clinics or school-based health centers.

- c. Without addressing consultation or conversation with a health care provider, which includes school nurses, HB 561 misses an opportunity to provide clarity on health options and information on conscientious exemptions or parental choice.

OASN and school nurses fully support parent choice in health care decisions for children and have been doing so for many years. Rather than strengthen parent choice, HB 561 limits children's health and well-being by removing the requirement for Hepatitis B immunizations, removing the ability to temporarily exclude exposed and unvaccinated children during epidemics, and missing opportunities for childcare and school health providers to address parent informed choice based on scientific, evidence-based information.

For these reasons we respectfully urge you to vote NO on HB 561.

The Ohio Association of School Nurses (OASN), an affiliate of the National Association of School Nurses (NASN), is the professional association for nurses working in Ohio schools and providing school health services. OASN's purpose is as multifaceted and dynamic as issues of health and wellness in Ohio's school aged children and their school communities. Our Board partners with other health organizations and advocates for health policy and legislation that will affect the health of children and our school communities.

The OASN Mission *promotes optimal wellness among Ohio's school children and their communities by supporting their educational success & providing leadership, education & support for the practice of school nursing.*



Pam Buehler BSN, RN, NCSN, President OASN



Kate King DNP, MS, RN, LSN

Executive Director, Ohio Association of School Nurses

OASN can be reached at [oasnpresident@gmail.com](mailto:oasnpresident@gmail.com) or [execdir.oasn@gmail.com](mailto:execdir.oasn@gmail.com)