

The Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Wednesday - March 24, 2021

Interested Party Testimony on House Bill 6  
Jeanie Bochenek, DNP, RN NCSN, Evidence Based (CH)

Chairwoman Roegner, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Minority Member Craig, and members of the Government Oversight and Reform Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today as an interested party of HB 6. I am submitting this testimony as a private citizen who is concerned about the physical and mental health, safety, and academic success of over 1.8 million children across the State of Ohio.

My name is Dr. Jeanie Bochenek and I have been a resident of Ohio for 52 years, a Registered Nurse (RN) for 29 years, a student receiving my bachelors, masters and doctorate degrees all from universities in Ohio, and finally I am nursing faculty at The Ohio State University – College of Nursing. Nineteen of my 29 years as a RN, I have been an Ohio Department of Education (ODE) licensed School Nurse and a School Nurse educator and consider this the most important work I have ever done. For many school students across Ohio their School Nurse is their only access to health care. For that reason, we have to make sure that School Nurses in Ohio are fully prepared to meet the highest needs that are facing all school children and especially those who are medically fragile.

School Nurses practice independently and often in isolated settings which makes it even more important for them to have the specialized knowledge and expertise required of an ODE licensed School Nurse so they can meet the multi-faceted needs of school children. As the lead faculty at The Ohio State University - College of Nursing where we offer a School Nurse Licensure program for RNs with a bachelor's degree, we prepare them to take on the school nursing specialty role. Similar ODE approved programs are offered by my colleagues across the state including Ashland University, Ohio University, Wright State University, and Youngstown State University.

The majority of School Nurse students I have worked with over the last 14 years have come to my classes with many years of working as a RN in different areas including Intensive Care, Labor and Delivery, Pediatrics, Emergency, Cardiac, Oncology, Surgery, Medical/Surgical and Public Health. In exit interviews, these experienced RNs have expressed that even though they have sound expertise as an RN, they recognize the importance of the additional education they obtained to earn the ODE School Nurse licensure.

- I never realized the comprehensive role of the School Nurse.
- My experience as a RN did not prepare me to work in the school setting.
- The role is much more than band aids. It is much harder than it looks.
- I did not know anything about Special Education laws or other laws in the school.
- I learned how to interact and be a part of the educational team.
- I gained knowledge about Individualized Health Plans, Emergency Action Plans, Individualized Education Plans, or 504 Plans and how to develop and give input.
- I learned to use advanced assessment skills.

In the state of Ohio, children have the opportunity to go to school and learn despite their health care status. This is so necessary for the development of all children. But, it is important that you recognize that many children in schools live with long term and life threatening medical conditions such as asthma, allergies, diabetes and seizure disorders. Other children in schools require treatments such as being fed through a tube that goes into their stomach, or having their mouth and nose suctioned to make it easier for them to breathe because of other medical diagnoses they have like cystic fibrosis or cerebral palsy. All of these are examples of children in Ohio schools who need to have a highly qualified and educated School Nurse to help them bridge the gap between their health care and education needs to support them in becoming their very best.

In addition to teaching in the School Nurse program at The Ohio State University, I teach Community Health nursing to highly motivated undergraduate and graduate students. We prepare outstanding graduates every year that enter into the nursing workforce. But additional educational preparation is still needed for RNs who take on the specialty of school nursing. 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 part of undergraduate nursing education:

- A comprehensive foundation of the knowledge, skills and dispositions to work in a kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade school setting.
- Specifics about the challenges of child health, development and learning; health management within school systems; special education or interventions; school health leadership; and required health education
- The laws and practices relevant 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).

This testimony that I am giving today reflects conversations that were needed prior to the swift December 22, 2020 passage of HB 442 and now HB 6’s amendment to the Ohio Rev. Code § 3319.221. These conversations were needed to understand the ramifications regarding the option for allowing an RN with an ODE registration to be called a School Nurse. At that time in December and over the last year, ODE licensed School Nurses were working to try and keep school children in school or get them back to school where they belong and can learn best.

To be respectful of your time, I will read the bolded text and the remaining specifics regarding the Ohio Revised Code can be viewed in my written testimony.

I am making the following requests:

1. **Reinstate Ohio Rev. Code § 3319.221 School nurse and school nurse wellness coordinator** as enacted prior to passage of HB 442
2. **Remove the inclusion of ODE registration for RNs as School Nurses in § 3319.221 [Effective 4/12/2021].** Professionals requiring department of education registration (A)(3) ...~~(3) A registered nurse who holds a bachelor's degree in nursing and a currently valid license issued under Chapter 4723. of the Revised Code.~~

The reason for this request is that under the current ORC 3313.68, school districts are authorized to employ the services of non-ODE licensed nurses to provide individual services for eligible students, and contract for RNs and LPNs to provide health services through public health departments, hospitals, Educational Service Centers, and other health care entities.

3. **Reinstate the following provisions in the current 3313.68 [Effective Until 4/12/2021]. Employment of physicians, dentists and nurses - delegation of duties and powers to board of health:**

.... The board of education may also employ registered nurses, as defined by section [4723.01](#) and licensed as school nurses under section [3319.221](#) of the Revised Code, to aid in such inspection in such ways as are prescribed by it, and to aid in the conduct and coordination of the school health service program. .... Notwithstanding any provision of the Revised Code to the contrary, the board of education of each city, exempted village, or local school district may contract with an educational service center for the services of a school nurse, licensed under section [3319.221](#) of the Revised Code, or of a registered nurse or licensed practical nurse, licensed under Chapter 4723. of the Revised Code, to provide services to students in the district pursuant to section [3313.7112](#) of the Revised Code.

In lieu of appointing or employing a school physician or dentist pursuant to division (A) of this section or entering into a contract for the services of a school nurse pursuant to division (B) of this section, the board of education of each city, exempted village, or local school district may enter into a contract under section 3313.721 of the Revised Code for the purpose of providing health care services to students.

4. **Allow only RNs earning an ODE School Nurse license to use the protected title of School Nurse.**
5. **Recognize only ODE licensed School Nurses as eligible for classification as certified/credentialed staff** (standard prior to passage of HB 442)

On behalf of the 1.8 million school children in Ohio, I implore you to recognize the extreme importance of providing these children with highly qualified School Nurses equipped with additional education to prepare them to take on the full role of the School Nurse. I am asking you to reconsider and protect the health and safety of Ohio's school children and promote the professional standards that the ODE licensed School Nurse stands for. The ODE 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.

I know that each of you want excellent healthcare for school children across Ohio. The best way to do this is to ensure that School Nurses in Ohio are equipped with the required knowledge and expertise to be able to carry out this important mission.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to give my testimony about HB 6 as an interested party. I am happy to take any questions you have.

Respectfully submitted,

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