

Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Wednesday, March 24, 2021

Opponent Testimony on House Bill 6

Heidi Shaw, Licensed School Nurse, President-Elect of the Ohio Association of School Nurses & Legislative Liaison to the Advocacy Committee

Chairwoman Roegner, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Minority Member Craig and members of the Ohio Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today as an opponent of HB 6.

My name is Heidi Shaw, and I'm here representing the Ohio Association of School Nurses as the President-Elect and the Legislative Liaison to the Advocacy Committee. I am also a proud licensed school nurse from Athens Ohio. I am here today to urge you to keep the health of Ohio's school children in the front of your mind when you vote on HB 6.

Years ago, I met with a parent from another school district, who was interested in moving to ours solely because her child had a chronic health condition and her previous district only had a "wellness aide." She knew the difference between a **licensed** school nurse and a nurse. She knew that her student would receive an individualized health plan, tailored to his needs and physicians orders. This would be communicated appropriately with all staff who needed to know. And that we would provide education not only to the staff but also to the student.

She knew a licensed School Nurse is a health leader specifically prepared to function **on their own** in a **non-healthcare setting** to meet the complex physical and socio-emotional health needs of Ohio's children.

She knew this, because she was also in the process of earning her school nurse license. Many parents and families, medical professionals, leaders in education, and even other nurses, do not understand the role of the school nurse. I hope to shed some light on that in these brief moments.

This past year, we have seen our licensed school nurses work as health leaders on our front lines working tirelessly to get our kids back into school by researching, implementing, and evaluating all of the health orders, figuring out the overlap or the conflicts, and consulting with other licensed school nurses finding out what is working and what's not. These leaders have been working incredible hours, devoting themselves to their calling. And

volunteering for public health initiatives like vaccine clinics and outreach efforts in their free time.

I am so very proud of the hard work, dedication, and continued motivation that OASN's membership has provided to Ohio's 1.8 million school children. The role of the school nurse has never been more important, especially in the time of COVID-19, and our additional education requirement is crucial to our students' success.

Previously, a licensed registered nurse with a minimum of a bachelor's degree in nursing (or related health services field) could complete additional coursework in school nursing to **earn** this protected title. Now, an individual who is a licensed registered nurse will be able to **purchase** a registration to act as a School Nurse without any additional education.

A nurse is not just a nurse. We have specialities. My Mom is a hospice nurse. She's amazing at it, and she can understand and navigate the incredibly delicate moments of someone's end of life. As amazing as she is at hospice and palliative care, if she purchased a registration, she could call herself a school nurse, but she would be lost. Purchasing a registration does not teach you advanced assessment skills that you will rely on. A registration does not teach you to recognize patterns of symptoms and develop a plan of intervention, or to serve as a vital resource for emergency preparedness in the midst of a global pandemic. Being a school nurse we can do these things because we are educationally prepared through a program of rigorous coursework and a school-based practicum.

School nursing is when I give one-on-one directions on wound-care to a 2nd grader who has a horrible looking skateboard wound and I know he's got a long weekend coming up and he won't have a lot of adults around. That's school nursing.

It's working with an international family and a student with a spinal injury for months prior to their arrival, to make sure that we had everything thought through from having records translated and working with numerous physicians and agencies.

It's talking to teachers about their family risk of COVID-19 last summer, when we were still so unsure if schools should be open or not. Being entrusted to be the medical voice of the school in that moment and still now is a responsibility that I will never forget.

It's about making your voice heard because you're not only standing up for what is right, but you're standing up for those students that deserve to have the licensed school nurse as their health leader.

As nurses our communities rely on us to help. As an elected official you understand that feeling. As a medical professional, often the only one INSIDE the school, I am asking you to let us help, by not just listening to our message, but putting it into action.

A registration is not enough. Please help us reinstate the licensed school nurse requirements and remove the registration option.

Thank you. I will gladly take your questions.

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