



Testimony before the Oregon State Health Care Committee
Regarding: SB 698
03/10/15

Nina Fekaris, MS, BSN, RN, NCSN

I ask for your support on this legislation and thank you on behalf of the children of Oregon. I bring a national perspective to this legislation effort. I have just completed a five year term serving as Oregon's representative on the Board of Directors for the National Association of School Nurses, with the last two years being on the Executive Committee. In that capacity I had the opportunity to work with nurses from across the county, many working in the public health sector and many working in the education sector. The states that have robust and effective school health programs, are those states where there is school nursing consultants in both 'houses'.

Take Virginia, as an example; there is a school nurse consultant housed in the Department of Education and another housed in the Public Health Department. When grants and programs are made available from the federal government with public health dollars, the school nurse consultant in public health house works closely with the nurse consultant in the education house to provide programs and funnel dollars and resources to school nurses. Likewise, when the public health side needs statistics and outcome measures, the two consultants work closely to gather that data from school nurses. They work in tandem to provide the best services to insure health needs of children are being met.

Historically in Oregon, school nurses were somewhat connected with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA). A little more than 15 years ago, the OHA received a grant to provide education to health care providers that work with children on asthma triggers and prevention. The OHA sponsored an educational conference for school nurses across the state, providing us with training and materials to help teach students and families about how to prevent asthma, how to reduce triggers, and how to treat exasperations. I still use some of the training supplies today. That was the last OHA sponsored educational conference provided to school nurses. That is not to say there is no current collaboration. We still work closely with immunizations and communicable disease management, but there is no individual or department within OHA that is specifically looking at how to support school nursing, how to measure health outcomes, and how to help keep students healthy, safe and in school until graduation. I believe creating this position, a consultant within the OHA that is dedicated to coordinating efforts for school nurses is vital for the health and academic success of our children.

I serve 3,688 students in 3 schools. 413 of my students have asthma. 106 have life threatening anaphylaxis. 41 have seizure disorders. 22 have Type 1 diabetes. 220 have individually written health management/emergency care plans for school. I work providing primary, secondary and tertiary public health services for my individual students, schools and community. While I provide my nursing service in the school setting and need my voice heard within the Department of Education, I also need my voice heard within the Oregon Health Authority. We need to coordinate and collaborate our nursing efforts to help Oregon students succeed.

Sincerely,
Nina Fekaris, MS, BSN, RN, NCSN