

I am writing in support of creating a School Nurse Specialist Position in the Department of Education. I am one on a team of 4 school nurses in a school district of 6000+ students. In my 6 years of school nursing practice, our team has always been supervised or led by a non-nurse administrator who may not fully understand school nursing practice and the potential school nurses have to positively impact the student population. A School Nurse Specialist can help bring consistency and uniformity to school nursing practice across the state of Oregon. School nurses are in a position to bridge the gap between healthcare and education for students. Health children learn better, and school nurses make it happen. School nurses are in the unique position to be able to decrease barriers to education related to both chronic and acute mental and physical health conditions, increase classroom performance, and decrease chronic absenteeism. A School Nurse Specialist will not only help provide clear, uniform school nursing guidelines that can optimize the talent and skills of nurses practicing in the school setting, they can also help provide academic administrators with a clear set of standards for evaluating school nursing practices within their districts. If anything, COVID-19 has illuminated how important the need is to have members of a healthcare team included in the planning for, and maintenance of, the health and well-being of Oregon's youth.