

Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs Javadi and Nelson, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Wendy Niskanen. I have practiced as a registered nurse in the school setting for nearly 20 years. I currently act as the Executive Director of the Oregon School Nurses Association and sit on the Board of the National Association of School Nurses. I am grateful for this opportunity to testify on behalf of Oregon students in support of Hannah's Law, HB2948, which will help resolve a crucial clinical scope of practice concern for nurses in the school setting.

The Oregon Nurse Practice Act, taken collectively, establishes that registered nurses are autonomous, self-regulating professionals who use the nursing process to direct their clinical practice in all settings. This legislation does not introduce a new concept. Rather it clarifies these tenets of nursing statute and rules for educators, stating that directing the clinical practice of a Registered Nurse is outside the scope of a non-nurse. We are collaborating with school administrators on an amendment that will clarify the bill's language while keeping its intent.

As clinical healthcare experts, school nurses practice in a non-medical setting, so our role is often misunderstood. Historically, without understanding their scope, non-nurse supervisors have directed the clinical practice of school nurses, impacting the care of students with medical needs, putting students at risk, and increasing districts' liability.

Nurses have shared many stories with me.

They have been pressured to manage the care of a 1:1, nursing-dependent student while they are managing their own caseload, charged with continuously monitoring a student on a ventilator while simultaneously managing the care of several medically fragile or complex students, including those with diabetes, across multiple buildings in a district.

Nurses have been asked to change their care plans for students when sufficient staff cannot be found to deliver safe care.

Nurses have been prohibited from delivering emergency care or calling 911 when an administrator does not believe that necessary.

One nurse shared that her advice to withhold oral feedings for a student who had not passed a swallow study was overruled, and the student acquired aspiration pneumonia.

Hannah's law would codify the protection of clinical autonomy of the school nurse, ensuring that decisions regarding medical care are based on their professional clinical expertise and not directed by non-medical personnel. It will ensure that school nurses dedicate their time to student care rather than referencing the law and defending safe, legal practices. I urge you to support this bill and help Oregon schools provide our students with safe, effective, and professional nursing services.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions or provide additional insights based on my experience.

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