



Virginia Association of School Nurses (VASN)

2018 Policy Priorities:

HB 791 (Pogge), HB 1046 (Torian) and SB 226 (Stuart)

School nurses are a critical, yet understaffed resource in Virginia's schools

School nurses are the first responders in the school setting, provide a wide range of acute care services to school-age children and personnel, promote healthy school communities, provide care coordination for children with chronic illness, initiate professional development activities and are often the link between the school, family, medical health care providers/specialists, and community.

Currently in Virginia, there are no minimum staffing levels for school nurses; rather, local school boards have the discretion to fill these positions as they deem necessary. There is wide variability in how localities staff their school nurses. In addition, geographic location and population density impact school nurse staffing across the Commonwealth. In 2016, the American Academy of Pediatrics called for a minimum of one full-time professional school nurse in every school to ensure the health and safety of students during the school day.

The current ratio of Registered Nurses to students in Virginia is 1:923¹

Employment of full time school nurses benefits students, parents, teachers and communities

- Employment of full-time school nurses shows a net financial benefit to communities, based on the cost of the medical procedures provided in the school setting that are generally “provided in a traditional medical care setting, “parents’ productivity loss costs associated” to pick up or care for a student leaving school early or associated with medication administration, and teachers’ productivity loss costs due to time teachers gave in attending to health care needs of students.²
- Disadvantaged students who had asthma missed 23% fewer school days when they had a full time school nurse.³ Many of these students are covered by Medicaid and therefore school nurses can help curb Medicaid costs.

VASN seeks your support for the following legislative measures:

HB 791 (Pogge), HB 1046 (Torian) and SB 226 (Stuart): Requires each local school board to employ at least one full-time equivalent school nurse position in each elementary school, middle school, and high school in the local school division **or** at least one full-time equivalent school nurse position per 550 students in grades kindergarten through 12.

The proposed increase in school nurse positions is consistent with 2016 SOQ recommendations by the Virginia Board of Education and recommendation by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Budget amendments will be introduced by bill patrons to increase state funding for additional school nurses to achieve the ratio of one fulltime equivalent school nurse position per 550 students. Please encourage House Appropriations and Senate Finance members to support these items.

¹ Campbell, T. (2016). Summer institute for school nursing July 10, 2016: 2016 school health update [Powerpoint slides].

² Wang, L., Vernon-Smiley, M., Gapinski, M., Desisto, M., Maughan, E., & Sheetz, A. (2014, May 19). Cost-Benefit Study of School Nursing Services. *JAMA Pediatrics*, Supplement, E1-E7. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2013.5441

³ Telljohann, S. K., Dake, J. A., & Price, J. H.,(2004). Effect of fulltime versus part-time school nurses on attendance of elementary students with asthma. *Journal of School Nursing*, 20, 331–334. doi:10.1177/10598405040200060701