



**VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL NURSES, INC.**  
**P.O. BOX 28313, RICHMOND, VA 23228**

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Virginia Association of School Nurses (VASN), I am pleased to submit the following comments on the proposed SOQ revisions recommending a ratio of 1:550 for school nurses in Virginia's public schools.

The VASN endorses the proposed SOQ revisions and the underlying rationale for the Board's proposal to recognize the importance and critical support that school nurses, school social workers, and school psychologists play in the education of our students. As the DOE document states, these professionals provide social, emotional, and physical supports to students and families. These services are essential, given the changing demographics of the student population that increasingly consists of English language learners, students from economically depressed families, and students requiring special education services.

Further, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) cites "Specialized Instructional Support Personnel" (SISP) multiple times (school nurses are included in this category) as essential for student learning. ESSA declares that SISP reduce barriers to learning and help children achieve their academic potential. School nurses are the basic infrastructure for the health of students in school, and they provide a critical link between student health and learning.

In May 2016, the Council on School Health of the American Academy of Pediatrics published its position statement on the role of the school nurse in providing school health services<sup>1</sup>. In the statement, the Council notes:

. . . school nurses understand and educate about normal development; promote health and safety, including a healthy environment; intervene with actual and potential health problems; provide case-management services; and actively collaborate with physicians. . .

The AAP Council's position statement recommends that there be a "minimum of 1 full-time professional school nurse in every school with medical oversight from a school physician in every school district as the optimal staffing to ensure the health and safety of students during the school day."

Our own national association, the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) in 2015 published its *School Nurse Workload: Staffing for Safe Care*<sup>2</sup>. The NASN does not recommend a specific staffing ratio, but rather an approach that considers student and community needs.

While the VASN understands the NASN position, we are also cognizant that the architecture of the SOQs is the legal means by which Virginia schools employ teacher, administrative, and support personnel and that the SOQs are linked to high educational aspirations and outcomes. Therefore, we are pleased that

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<sup>1</sup> AAP Council on School Health. Role of the School Nurse in Providing School Health Services. *Pediatrics*. 2016: 137 (6): e20160852. Available on the AAP website.

<sup>2</sup> Available at the NASN website, [www.nasn.org](http://www.nasn.org).

the Board will be considering this SOQ revision. We also note that, in the aggregate, school nurse staffing approaches this current ratio. Therefore, the proposed SOQ revision on school nursing should have a minimal impact on state funding.

That said, not all school divisions currently employ school nurses in a manner that assures access to the services of professional health personnel. The NASN, VASN, and the American Academy of Pediatrics all support the registered nurse as the professional who should provide health services. Further, the Code of Virginia defines registered nurse, professional nurse, and registered professional nurse as a person who is licensed to practice professional nursing (§54.1-3000). We will continue to work with local school divisions to meet this goal.

Every school day, Virginia school nurses utilize professional expertise in providing appropriate care to students. With the overarching goal of keeping them healthy and present in school, school nurses assess, evaluate, and manage acute illnesses and injuries, as well as chronic health conditions such as diabetes, food allergies and asthma. School nurses conduct classroom teaching on a variety of topics including infection control measures, dental care, personal hygiene, nutrition, obesity and outdoor safety. School nurses collaborate with staff members, families and primary health care providers, as community health professionals, to facilitate care coordination and enhance the opportunity for every student to succeed. On an ever-increasing basis, school nurses provide emotional support to young people who are struggling with anxiety, depression, eating disorders, substance abuse and bullying issues.

Thank you so much for supporting this revision in the SOQs to recognize and promote the role of the school nurse.

Best Regards,

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