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April 15, 2020

Senator Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee
428 Dirksen Senator Office Building, US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murray:

On behalf of [56.6 million](#) pre-kindergarten, elementary and high school students in the United States and the National Association of School Nurses (NASN), we ask that you fund 10,000 school nurses for the upcoming school year as this country begins to open schools in the recovery phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. School re-entry will bring many challenges for students as they resume classes in school year 2020-2021. Students will experience mental and behavioral health concerns that may present as physical health issues; they will need support from school nurses.

School nurses are front line health care providers, serving as the bridge between the health care and education systems. Whether they are hired by school districts, health departments, or hospitals, school nurses look after the physical and mental health of students in school. School nurses, as public health sentinels, engage school communities, parents, and healthcare providers to promote wellness and improve health outcomes for children. For many children living in or near poverty, the school nurse may be the only health care professional they access regularly. School nurses are essential in infectious disease surveillance, identification and intervention for student physical and mental health concerns, health screenings, school located vaccinations and immunization compliance efforts. Additionally, children today face more chronic and complex health conditions than ever before. Access to a school nurse is a student equity issue.

Historically children have been the first to show signs of an epidemic and the school nurse has been a bell weather of illness. As we look at the 2020-2021 school year that will also coincide with new influenza, the need for new school nurses is paramount. School nurses support the academic success of students by making sure they are healthy, safe, and ready to learn.

During a crisis such as this, school nurses serve students and families in schools and in communities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, school nurses continue working to check in on students with chronic conditions, either by phone or through telehealth; others provide home visits. Some school nurses collaborate with school staff to ensure that children receive needed meals. Other school nurses serve at COVID-19 testing centers and as contact tracers to support local and state public health departments.

As you and our other Congressional leaders negotiate stimulus packages centered on the COVID-19 pandemic, consider that only 39 percent of public schools have a school nurse all day, every day, while another 35 percent of schools have a school nurse who works part-time in one or more schools, leaving 25 percent of schools without a fulltime school nurse. Healthy students learn better. When a school nurse is present to meet student healthcare needs, parents and school administrators know that children and youth can focus on learning. Thank you for your consideration to address the health, safety, and readiness to learn of students by increasing school nurse positions in U. S. schools. Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of assistance or put you in touch with NASN members from your local communities.

Sincerely,

Laurie Combe

Laurie Combe, MN, RN, NCSN
President