

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Public Education
For HB 1281

Compiled on: Tuesday, May 2, 2023 10:36 PM

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Hearing Date: May 2, 2023 8:00 AM

Eric Kunish, Chair
National Alliance on Mental Illness-Central Texas Affiliate
Austin, TX

We support this bill!

Becca Harkleroad
Texas School Nurses Organization
Spicewood, TX

More than 40% of school-aged children in the U.S. have at least one chronic health condition that requires daily management and has potential for medical emergencies. However, Texas does not require schools to employ nurses or any similar professionals who can address these health needs at school. Texas School Nurses Organization supports this bill as an effort to protect the health and safety of all Texas school children. Many people assume school nurses are available for the immediate care of sick and injured students as well as managing chronic conditions and educating staff on how to assist in medical emergencies, but this is just not the case in all Texas schools.

Pamela Suarez, Mrs

STISD

McAllen, TX

: As a concerned constituent who would be negatively affected by HB 5294, I am writing to express my opposition to this legislation which would impact thousands of students, families, and communities who rely on school districts such as South Texas Independent School District, which falls under the scope of this bill, to educate our children. As a voting member of the House Committee on Public Education, I am writing to urge you to oppose any legislation that would threaten the existence of South Texas ISD as an exemplary public school district choice for students in Hidalgo, Cameron, and Willacy counties. This public school district has been in existence for nearly 60 years, has consistently demonstrated academic success with some of the best schools in the country, provides FREE transportation to students in the tri-county area, and is a valuable option for students in South Texas.

As a parent of a student at South Texas ISD, I have seen the direct impact of the excellent education.

On behalf of my family, and the thousands of families, students, alumni, and community supporters of South Texas ISD, I urge you to oppose any legislation proposing to reform the tax authority and any changes that compromise South Texas ISD's funding or districts like ours across the State of Texas. These school districts provide families and students with high quality educational opportunities. While they are indeed unique in scope, these institutions were created by the legislature to serve Texans and have been doing so with a high success rate, college attendance rate, and while providing exceptional learning opportunities to our communities.

As such, I urge you to please consider voting in opposition to HB 5294 which would negatively impact funding, learning, and educational opportunities for the thousands of students not only in our district, but those who fall under its scope, across the State of Texas.

Should the need arise, I am available and willing to provide my personal testimonial to you, your staff, and/or on the public record. I appreciate your attention to and consideration of this matter. Should you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Cheryl Laws, RN

self

Houston, TX

My name is Cheryl Laws every school should have a full-time school nurse. If a school does not have a fulltime school nurse the parents need to be notified that a full-time nurse is not employed at the school. When a student enrolls knows their medical condition until the day the child enroll. In my 25 years working as a school nurse, I have seen students with cardiomyopathy, heart transplant, kidney transplant, renal insufficiency, diabetics, high blood pressure, arthritis, lupus, depression, seizure, cancer ODD, ADD and feeding tubes I had a student who cut his finger off on the playground, a student who blood sugar dropped to 35 while at PE. A custodial who had a heart attack in the cafeteria and a student who have stabbed me with a screwdriver during a mental crisis. For some students the school nurse is the only medical profession students see. At 715 in the morning parent instruct their child to see the nurse when they come to school ill. School nurses are sentinel for mental health for students. Students [frequently] come to the school nurse first when they're having difficulties. Quite often, their mental health concerns manifest in what we call psychosomatic complaints, or physical complaints. So, headaches, stomach aches, symptoms of panic attacks that students don't recognize as panic attacks, even muscle pain, sleepiness. So, school nurses are often the first people to recognize some of those things as mental health concerns. What happens when a school doesn't have a school nurse??The first thing is that students just get sent back to class. If they are asking for help over and over, and if they are turned away often enough, they stop asking. They internalize their issues and their problems and we can see a spiral into decreased evidence of learning and increased mental health concerns.

The second thing which I think could be even more damaging, is the student—and it's not that people don't care, it's just that everybody is so busy right?—The student gets judged for those things. "Oh, she's a whiner or a complainer. Oh, she's trying to fake it to get out of class. She's lazy or he's lazy." The pandemic adds another layer to the mental health problems we were seeing before COVID. A school nurse is the gateway recognizing and catching students with both mental and physical ailments.

Hearing Date: May 2, 2023 8:00 AM

Ginger Johnson

Myself

Emory, TX

There should be no religious symbols or phrases in any public school. I will protest this and spread the word on voting records to all people I know.

Victoria DeLaFuente, MSN, BSN, RN

Self - Employed by Northside ISD

San Antonio, TX

It is my honor to address you concerning School Nursing in Texas. I have been a nurse for over 30 years and honestly, I thought school nursing would be easier than working in the hospital. That is not true. I do not just put on band aids and pass out stickers. I am required to make split second decisions related to medical emergencies that may save the life of a student or minimize neurocognitive or physical sequelae. I provide assessments of children with diabetes, asthma, seizures, and anaphylactic reactions to a variety of substances. In Texas, only a Registered Nurse is allowed to provide this type of problem-focused assessment in the school setting.

I communicate with Physicians, Staff Members, and Parents as well as the Students. Providing Health Education is a daily part of my assignment. I also coordinate the State Mandatory Health Screenings (i.e., hearing, vision, and scoliosis screenings). Besides administering routine medications, I am responsible for emergency medications. This year we received Naloxone (Narcan) to administer in the event someone has to be treated for an opioid overdose. Sad that this is now a staple in my medication cabinet at an elementary school. I am also certified in CPR and trained in Stop the Bleed procedures. Another difficult topic in the times we now live in. I cannot speak for all of the nurses in my district, but I have extensive education and experience in the acute care setting. This is advantageous when assessing ill students and staff.

And then there was COVID. As you know this public health crisis caused countless delays in the education of our children as well as emotional obstacles for many. I am not a Counselor on my campus, but I assist them when needed with the children who may be suicidal or unstable emotionally. So you see, a band aid just won't do.

School Nurses are the only medical professionals on school campuses, and they are invaluable to help keep our children healthy-physically, emotionally, and spiritually. An Educator once told me, "You can have all the bells and whistles in a school, but if you don't have a healthy child, there's not a lot of learning going on!" I agree. Please continue to support having an RN in each school in Texas. Our children deserve nothing less.