



Nurse Specialists in School Health
We Care for Rhode Island's Children

November 27, 2018

Dear Commissioner Wagner and Committee,

RI Certified School Nurse-Teachers serve a unique role as in supporting and protecting the health of RI students. School nursing is a specialty much like that of ICU nurses or neonatal nurses, requiring additional education and training beyond that of an RN. Our current certification is recognized as validation of knowledge in the specialty of school nursing and assures the public that their child's school nurse has the appropriate knowledge and skills.

The coursework required prepares the certified school nurse teacher to work in a community setting with an understanding of educational theory, program development, and the ability to connect with community resources. The population health component speaks to communicable disease, mass screenings, immunization compliance and an understanding of epidemiology. This coursework is not offered in a basic undergrad RN program.

I have read the recent proposed draft changes for this committee will discuss today. Although we appreciate the intent to assure certification includes additional training, substituting PLU's for masters level coursework does not provide for the depth of knowledge required. Since CSNT's work in isolation of their peers, there is little opportunity for on the job learning and mentoring. School nurses must walk through the door prepared to face the demands of the practice as the lone practitioner in an educational setting.

I understand that part of the issue driving these changes is a concern for an adequate pipeline. As a district Health Services Coordinator for the past 25 years, I have never experienced a lack of qualified candidates for open positions. If specific districts are having difficulty, our professional state association is quite willing to work with those districts to assist them in hiring qualified candidates. Over the past several years, I have personally received many calls from RN's asking how they can become certified. I am certain that there are many more who are interested in certification who just don't know how to access the information and navigate the system. This is an area where RICSNTA and RIDE could work together to help to clarify that process and make it easily searchable for those RN's interested in becoming certified.

In conclusion, at a time when we are seeing students with increasingly complex health issues, we should be requiring more specialized education and training, not less. Board members must carefully consider the seriousness of their decision and its potential impact on RI's school children. Our children deserve highly competent, appropriately educated, and well prepared school nurses in every school.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra J. Delack, M ED, BSN, RN, NCSN, FNASN



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Dear Chair Cottam, Chair McConaghy, and members of Elementary and Secondary Board of Education,

I am writing to respectfully request that you oppose the alternate pathway for school nurse certification currently being proposed by RIDE.

I have worked as a CSNT for 29 years and for the past 13 years, have served as program supervisor/coordinator for the nursing department in Cranston Public Schools. Additionally, I am currently president-elect of RI Certified School Nurse Teacher Association (RICSNTA).

At all four RIDE public hearings held last month, numerous nurses testified that school nursing is a specialty in nursing that requires advanced coursework beyond the nurses' baccalaureate degree. Undergraduate courses prepare nurses for practice in medical settings and focus entirely on nursing theory and practice. There are no undergraduate courses that prepare or introduce nurses to the specialty of school nursing. Upon entering this specialty school nurses are expected to provide a realm of services without direct support from a mentor or preceptor to orient them as they transition to this career change. Coursework currently required for certification prepares them for this role and ensures that RI school children receive high quality health and nursing services.

Although most districts in RI are able to fill CSNT vacancies, there remains a problem of hiring substitute nurses, especially in those districts with lower per diem compensation rates. RICSNTA recognizes that recruitment of school nurses is problematic. Nurses are unfamiliar with jargon, acronyms, laws and regulations, and hiring methods and forums, including SchoolSpring, commonly found in the educational arena. In addition, navigating the certification process has been challenging and confusing for nurses. Moving forward, RICSNTA plans to address these issues to increase the pool of interested school nurse teachers.

Currently, RIDE issues preliminary certification to a Registered Nurse with a Baccalaureate degree and 3 years of nursing experience. Completion of required coursework in a specified period of time qualifies them to renew their certification. This is a successful mechanism that increases the pool of applicants for school nurse teacher vacancies and provides a time frame to ensure completion of courses required for certification.

RICSNTA members are on the front lines of school nursing and possess a wealth of knowledge and experience invaluable to addressing and solving the aforementioned issues. We are happy and would be honored to work collaboratively with RIDE to address these issues in the interest of ensuring that all children receive the highest quality health and nursing services in our schools throughout Rhode Island.

Respectfully submitted,


Deborah L. Svitil, M.Ed, RN, BSN, CSNT
President-Elect, RICSNTA

As the faculty member who works most closely with the School Nurse Teacher Certification Pathway, I am writing this letter of support on behalf of the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development, reiterating its support of the current School Nurse Teacher Certification Pathway. School Nurse Teachers do not simply provide first aid and comfort. They are charged with providing classroom education; and with ensuring that their school provides a physically, psychologically, and an otherwise safe environment in which students can attain the district's educational goal,, and meeting cultural competency requirements. This includes classroom, field trip, after-school programming and school bus settings.

Much as ER nurses require specialized training for the ER, School Nurse Teachers require specialized training to fully and correctly provide full services. Those enrolled in the Certification Pathway can work in schools while making adequate progress under RIDE regulations. Other professionals in schools who work intensively with teachers, students, and their parents have similar requirements. For example, school psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers are required to complete graduate degrees before hiring. Occupational, physical, and speech and language therapists are required to complete certifications; note that their work is typically limited to individualized sessions with students, communication with their parents regarding these sessions , and only occasional IEP meetings. This is in contrast to the work of School Nurse Teachers, who are more fully integrated into the school setting and system, and therefore require a deep understanding of policies, processes, and workings of schools.

The required courses fully prepare School Nurse Teachers to adhere to the mandated RI Professional Teaching Standards (RIPTS), required for anyone who teaches in schools, including those teaching health education classes and health-related workshops. The courses also prepare School Nurse Teachers to perform the following and other required duties:

- Plan and implement lessons and workshops (including any for parents, as well as for students), using evidence-based pedagogical techniques;
- Align these with RIPTS standards, district expectations, the 2010 RI Education Framework, and the 2015 RIDE Comprehensive Health Instructional Outcomes, dedicated to building health literacy in pre-K –grade 12 students;
- Maintain the “healthful school environment” mandated by Section 2.1 of the 2014 Rules and Regulations for School Health as approved by the RI Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education;
- Regularly participate in IEP meetings and constructing off-campus safety plans for educational field trips for children with disabilities or those who are medically fragile – unlike nurses with no training in pedagogy and classroom management, they are well prepared to understand the child’s educational needs and help design truly individualized accommodations;
- Identify and implement evidence-based health programs for school and school-related settings, as recommended for School Health Programs by the RI Department of Health;
- Support and implement education of children infected with HIV/AIDS;
- Serve a critical role in suicide prevention in schools;
- Safely and accurately provide mandated testing services such as for scoliosis, a required test with a format that can potentially re-traumatize students who have experienced physical abuse;
- Assist in maintaining the orderly operation of the school, as described in Title 16, Chapter 20 of the RI Department of Health.

Bachelors’s Degree Programs in Nursing do not provide such professional training, and so do not appropriately prepare nurses for a career in the specialized school and classroom environments.

Rhode Island College’s Feinstein School of Education and Human Development holds the unequivocal position that the School Nurse Teacher role and its 8-course graduate-level certification

process be left unchanged. School Nurse Teachers are trained educators, with certification in pedagogy and classroom management, prepared to develop and implement evidence-based health programs, curricula, full-sized classrooms, and large-group workshops to students at all grade levels. The courses fully prepare School Nurse Teachers to adhere to the mandated RI Professional Teaching Standards (RIPTS) and the RIDE Comprehensive Health Instructional Outcomes, required for anyone who teaches in schools, including health education.

If the Council does decide to move to create a separate Pathway for *supplemental* School Nurses who do not engage in any teaching or other educational activities, the Feinstein School stipulates that the words "teacher" and "educator" should *not* be part of the title, and these supplemental school nurses should not be in classrooms in any capacity. Further, a school nurse in this role should not consult in decisions related to individualized education plans or school environment safety plans, as these nurses would not be prepared to develop accommodations that ensure that children's educational needs are met. If School Nurse Teachers are professionals who teach health education, even in a very small way, they should be held to the RIPTS and to any new initiatives for RI teachers, and should obtain SNT Certification. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Elizabeth S. England-Kennedy, PhD, MPH, CHES
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October 11 2018

Comments in reference to alternative pathway to certification of school nurse teachers

My name is Marilyn Mattera RN, BS, MEd, CSNT. LNC

The Certified School Nurse Teacher Organization is requesting that the council consider a moratorium on the alternative pathway. The organization would like to collaborate with the Department of Education Certification Office to resolve the SUBSTITUE ISSUES which appears to be driving force behind an alternative pathway..

I would like to address the reasoning for this statement.

It is my understanding that some principals and administrators have commented in regards to substitutes and Certified School Nurse teacher availability.

For the past 35yrs the Certified School Nurses have served Rhode Island students in all of the school districts as well as some private and parochial schools. During that time period our membership of actively Certified School Nurses has been between 180 and 200 members. So for over 35yrs we have had more than enough Certified School Nurse to meet the needs of the school districts. At the present time we still have nurses actively pursuing course work at Rhode Island College.

We have an active strong membership because of the strong commitment to the well being of the students we serve. Since 1978 before PDI and CEU were invented the Certified School Nurses Organization had workshops with the Rhode Island Lung Association, the Rhode Island Heart Association, The American Cancer Society, the National Dairy Association and other health organization. We self monitor our own educational qualifications and collaborate with other important health providers which affect the students well being.

Rhode Island College, the Department of Education and Health Department have established the goals, standards and criteria for the Certified School Nurses, We have met them for all these years in an exemplary way due to the consistent quality of the program and the educators involved.

All the testimony given over the past several months has indicated that we have met the educational and nursing standards and I do not believe that their credibility is being challenged. It is sad that to think the Department of Education would disrupt the continuity of these standards when it may be an easy fix. This is not how successful we have been in meeting all the criteria set forth or about QUALITY OF CARE students with be provided. This alternative pathway which some administrators feel will be less expensive and easier to manage.

With the disarray of Health Care Services today we are the first line of care for many students and their families. Parents need the expert knowledge to help them navigate their child's care that may be

impacting their learning. That is what our certification provides within the school and community settings.

The Certified School Nurses collaborate with other professionals within the school setting in order to enhance the student ability to stay well and remain in school to learn. We are an Important and integral part of the Evaluation Team we can write IEP's and 504 plans when necessary. Wellness is our Goal

Let Rhode Island make a statement that OUR CHILDREN'S WELLNESS AND EDUCATION CANNOT BE SEPARATED.

I am strongly opposing any change in the present certification.

Teixeira, Angela

From: Arruda, Linda <Linda.Arruda@ppsd.org>
Sent: Wednesday, October 31, 2018 2:59 PM
To: Teixeira, Angela
Subject: Commissioner's proposed changes for school nurse certification

Good Afternoon Council,

I would like to share my opinion of Commissioner Wagner's proposal for school nurse certification change. The change that the Commissioner is proposing would be beneficial to all new nurses whom have a few years experience in nursing but choosing the school nurse path. It will allow nurses like me to pursue a Master's Degree in our profession or in Education in a program that is flexible with where we may live or home life situation.

I believe that further education should be a desired criteria to further advance one's self and expertise, but allowing one to reach these goals by letting each individual decide where they would like or how to take their degree is beneficial. I was looking for an opportunity for the past few years in becoming a school nurse, and the recent change allowed me to come to Providence District. But allowing RIC pathway to not be the only pathway, allows me to pursue my degree via an online program or one close to home.

I was a nurse at Women and Infants Hospital for the past 17 years, and live in Massachusetts. I have the desire to get my Masters degree with hope to go through the University of Massachusetts -Amhurst program online. I have had 10 years volunteering also as a school nurse in a private school setting in my area. My goal was to start my degree, but I am holding off in hopes that the Commissioner's changes goes through. Going to RIC at night after working all day, raising my family in Massachusetts, and having to commute in the evening is feasible but very much time consuming from my obligations as a mother.

I hope that my opinion shines some light into the idea of allowing one to pursue a Masters Degree in Education outside of the state of Rhode Island. I do believe the and medication and regulations class based on Rhode Island law is needed, but should be done as a professional development day course, that must be done every 3 years. This idea stems from Boston University online continuing education offered to all nurses in Massachusetts and is a requirement, but is offered about four times a year.

Thank you for taking time and consideration on this matter.

Linda F Arruda RN
School Nurse Teacher
Nathan Bishop Middle School
456-9344

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Teixeira, Angela

From: Alyssa S. Koerner <AKoerner@nsps.us>
Sent: Monday, October 29, 2018 8:14 AM
To: Teixeira, Angela
Subject: New Certification

Good morning,

I am writing with my concerns about the new certification requirements. I believe they are asking too much of Rhode Island's teachers. We are already putting in extensive time and energy into our classrooms while trying to balance life with our own families. We also give a lot of extra time to school initiatives which you say will not count. Requiring so many hours for re-certification as well as having strict requirements for what hours would count is not feasible for many of us.

In addition, if the school is not required to supply or pay for this professional development, many of us will not be able to afford it. Tying our certificates to our SLO data is has been working just fine in my district. Alternately, I believe free and extensive PD opportunities need to be offered statewide for all of the teachers.

Sincerely,
Alyssa S. Koerner
First Grade Teacher
North Smithfield Elementary School

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Thank you.
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Teixeira, Angela

From: Marianne Manzi <mmanzi1029@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, October 26, 2018 1:33 PM
To: Teixeira, Angela; Foehr, Lisa
Subject: Proposed Certification Changes Input...

Good Afternoon!

One last bit of information in case you haven't seen this or may be interested:

New Jersey's instructional and non-instructional school nurse certificates information.....

Link to non-instructional school nurse certification: <https://www.nj.gov/education/educators/license/endorsements/3010S.pdf>

Link to instructional school nurse certification: <https://www.nj.gov/education/educators/license/endorsements/3000S.pdf>

I hope we can come together with RIDE to discuss.

Thanks again,

Marianne Manzi

On Fri, Oct 26, 2018 at 11:30 AM Marianne Manzi <mmanzi1029@gmail.com> wrote:
Good Morning, Angela and Lisa,

I may be a day late and a dollar short, but feel the need to communicate my thoughts to you regarding the proposed changes to the School Nurse Certification. I did testify at the public hearing in North Kingstown but recently realized I hadn't submitted written testimony.

I plan to be brief... the least I can do since I'm a bit late...

Some ideas.....

Ideally, I see a School Nurse Certification through the Department of Nursing, since School Nursing is a recognized specialty of nursing. The courses would deal with the types of assessments required in school nursing - which I know you heard about during the hearings - areas not covered in general nursing programs. The program could also include courses in education that would be necessary to function in the school setting - educational law, writing 504, IHP, and IEP goals, etc.....

In this case, if a certified school nurse desires to specialize in teaching health, additional courses could be taken to obtain the teacher certification. A school district can then decide the certification(s) that best suit their needs and hire accordingly.

I realize it is difficult to find certified school nurse substitutes. The main reason for that is more an issue of pay rather than a shortage of nurses. Substitutes pay is much less, in most cases, than the pay an RN with experience would get in another setting. I was fortunate when I went into school nursing 24 years ago that I was married with a husband that was making a good wage, so I could afford to take the drastic decrease in pay. A nurse in that situation is becoming more and more rare. The 2nd option of "certification" proposed could be possible for substitutes, but those qualifications will NOT be sufficient for a nurse to independently manage a health office and hundreds of students any more than a babysitter could function adequately as a parent. It's just not in the best interests of the students and certainly not safe for the unprepared nurse.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, etc.

Thank you so much for allowing me to express my opinion.

Marianne

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Teixeira, Angela

From: Foehr, Lisa
Sent: Friday, October 26, 2018 12:01 PM
To: Wagner, Ken; Teixeira, Angela
Subject: FW: New Cert Regs - Presentation and Next Steps

I know we're out of comment period etc. but sending this in case we think she would be helpful for anything.

Lisa M. Foehr | Chief, Division of Teaching & Learning
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From: Elizabeth Richards-Hegnauer <ms.richards-hegnauer@tapaprovidence.org>
Sent: Wednesday, October 24, 2018 11:45 AM
To: Foehr, Lisa <Lisa.Foehr@ride.ri.gov>
Subject: New Cert Regs - Presentation and Next Steps

Hi Lisa,

I just wanted to reach out and compliment you on the presentation you gave to the Council last night on the new cert regs and the responses to them. It was incredibly thoughtful and did a really great job of pointing out what we know RI needs vs. what people complained about. I was really impressed.

I also want to apologize: I had intended to write a letter of support for the new regs, but time got away from me. I believe strongly that what you are proposing is right for Rhode Island and is vital. If there's anything that I -- or TAPA -- can do to help get this across the finish line, we are happy to do so.

I am so grateful for the work you and your team have put into it,

Liz

--

Elizabeth Richards-Hegnauer, Head of School

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