

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5783

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, February 15, 1999

Title: An act relating to school nurses.

Brief Description: Establishing nurse/student ratios for schools.

Sponsors: Senators Thibaudeau, Deccio, Prentice, Costa, Eide, Goings, Johnson, Zarelli, Wojahn and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/15/99 [DP-EDU].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Education.

Signed by Senators Thibaudeau, Chair; Wojahn, Vice Chair; Costa, Deccio, Franklin, Johnson and Winsley.

Staff: Rhoda Jones (786-7198)

Background: A survey conducted by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) during the 1997-98 school year found that in class I school districts (those with over 2,000 students), the ratio of school nurses to students is approximately one nurse to 1,650 students. In class II districts (those with enrollments under 2,000 students), the ratio is one nurse to 2,300 students.

Recent studies have shown that an increasing number of school children in grades kindergarten through 12 have health conditions which need nursing attention during school hours.

There has been growing concern that an insufficient number of school nurses in most districts are managing the health needs of thousands of students in school settings.

Summary of Bill: Beginning with the 1999-2000 school year, each school district must maintain a ratio of not less than one school nurse for every 1,500 full-time students.

In the year 2000-01, the ratio must be not less than one nurse for every 1,000 full-time students.

In the 2001-2002 school year, each district must maintain a ratio of not less than one school nurse for every 750 full-time students.

Second class school districts are not required to maintain these ratios.

School nurses must have a bachelor degree in nursing which includes public health training, must be certified as an educational staff associate, must have completed additional postgraduate work including specific training in school health, crisis intervention, health counseling, child development and drug and alcohol curriculum.

School nurses must have professional nursing experience in school settings for the equivalent of three school years within the past six years.

The office of Superintendent of Public Instruction is directed to report to the Legislature on the impact of the provisions in this act and make recommendations for future funding.

The requirements for nurse ratios in school districts provided for in this bill expire on June 30, 2002.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 12, 1999.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: There is a clear need for professional nurses to be in schools where students are requiring significant nursing attention. Classified school employees are doing too much with too little training.

Testimony Against: The bill does not solve the problem of how to get more nurses in schools. It just requires districts do it.

Testified: PRO: Marilyn Fenn, Pat McCoy, Jeanne Baransky, Lori Anderson, SNOW; Doug Nelson, PSE; CON: Dwayne Slate, State School Directors.