

My name is Jennifer Cottle and for the past 26 years, I have been known as Nurse Cottle to student, family and staff at Williwaw and Ravenwood Elementary, as well as ELL Summer Programs and ESY Preschool. I am also the current President of the Alaska School Nurse Association. I am writing today to express my concerns with the budget proposal specifically related to the Regional Nursing Model, removing nurses out of schools full time.

I stand with the position statements and recommendations of both the National School Nurse Association (NASN) and American Academy of Pediatrics (APP) which both support full time school nurses in schools.

I have attached a PDF of the NASN Position Statement. School Nurses: An Integral Member of the School Team Addressing Absenteeism. This discusses the school nurses role within a school along with data that supports school nurses positive impact on school attendance.

I would like to point out the statistic listed in this statement that “One study found that 92.4% of students indicated that health concern were the reason they were “sometimes” or “usually absent (Brundage, Castillo, & Batsche, 2017)

According the CDC *“In the United States, more than 40% of school-aged children and adolescents have at least one chronic health condition, such as asthma, obesity, other physical conditions, and behavior/learning problems. The healthcare needs of children with chronic illness can be complex and continuous and includes both daily management and addressing potential emergencies.”*

<https://archive.cdc.gov/#/details?url=https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/chronicconditions.htm>

I see and directly manage more chronic health and mental health conditions now than I did 26 years ago. I currently medically manage one newly diabetic, 1 tube feeding in PK with an anticipated 2 more by the end of this school year, and 15 daily medication administrations. I have 20 nurse office visit/procedure or medication administration scheduled daily, in addition to an average of 30-35 additional office visits related to illness, injury, health screenings, crisis interventions, behavior interventions, IEP and 504 meetings, health office management, and the list goes on.

My student population listed on the Data Dashboard is 364 students, special needs Pre-K through 5th grade. As I am writing this, according to our Electronic Health Management system report of event statistics, I have recorded 3,983 office visits since the beginning of this school year. That total does not reflect 504/IEP meetings I attend, health wellness activities I coordinate, to include Red Ribbon Week, Annual school wide community Flu Vaccination Clinic, and coordinating the return of the Ravenwood Science Fair, following the pandemic.

The Regional Nursing Model removes nurses out of the school full-time. It diminishes the ability of the school nurse's role to build trusting relationships with our students and their families. **School nursing is about face to face interactions, creating connections, building trust and a safe place for all students to learn and reach their highest potential.**

I have included below the description of the role of the school nurse which can be found on the State of Alaska Department of Health Website:

"The school nurse is the professional who serves in a pivotal role to provide expertise and oversight of the provision of school health services, which address barriers to learning. School nurses serve as an extension of the public health system. They support student success by providing health care assessment, intervention, and follow-up for all children within the school setting. attendance is linked to academic success and graduation rates. A higher nurse to student ratio is associated with better attendance rates. School nurses improve attendance through health promotion, disease prevention and disease management". <https://health.alaska.gov/en/division-of-public-health/women-children-family-health/school-health-services/>

I am greatly concerned that Health Service leaders have been unable to provide the nurses with evidence based research and statistics on the benefits and successful implementation of the Regional Nursing Model within Urban School District settings. When this question was brought up during an optional nurse information meeting held on 2/6/2026, the answer was they have no data or research but "have talked to some friends in the lower 48 about what they do". They are "not sure how all this will work yet, and developing a team to work on this". I am greatly concerned for the implementation of a model that has not been investigated and thoroughly researched. I do not see how this model is feasible to be in place within the next 6 months prior to the start of next school year without great impact to student safety and an increase in liability. I understand our budget deficit and lack of funding from our state and the seriousness of the situation. I know that cuts need to be made. However, these cuts should not come at the cost of our students safety and needed supports.

I implore you to investigate the State Board of Nursing's Statutes on Unlicensed Assistive Personnel (UAP) and the limitations of their roles. The use of UAP's is a very divisive and complicated issue, without even discussing the increase in workload and liability to an unlicensed assistive personal, who we have been told will fall to our office staff and/or principal's to fill this role, should they choose to accept that training.

I am an advocate for the students, families and staff of the Anchorage School District. I support One Nurse, One School, with the research that exists which supports this practice and implementation, along with my 26 years of school nursing practice. I believe that budget cuts should come from outside the walls of the schools first, before cutting teachers, support staff, programs and activities, and increasing class sizes. It is time the district starts cutting away the fat, not cut away at the heart of the Anchorage School District.

My office is always open for a visit, and I am available by phone or email to have further conversations.

Thank you for your time during these very tumultuous times for all of public education.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Cottle, BSN, RN, NCSN

Ravenwood Elementary School Nurse

President, Alaska School Nurse Association 2024-2026

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