

Government of the District of Columbia Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B



RESOLUTION #4B-24-1006

Calling for a Full-Time Nurse in Every Public School and Efforts to Enhance Staffing Adopted October 28, 2024

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B (Commission) takes note of the following:

- School nurses play a critical role in [promoting the health and well-being of students](#), [providing essential healthcare services](#), managing chronic health conditions, and addressing medical emergencies during the school day.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Association of School Nurses [recommend that every school have at least one full-time registered nurse](#) to manage students' healthcare needs, reduce absenteeism, and improve academic outcomes. According to the National Association of School Nurses, [the recommended ratio of school nurses to students is 1:750 for the general student population and 1:225 for students with daily needs](#). Yet many schools across the nation fall short of this standard: [less than half of the nation's schools have a full-time registered nurse on staff](#), highlighting a significant gap in essential healthcare services for students, a dire situation that puts student health at risk.
- DC has employed a [cluster model](#) for school nurses since September 2023. Instead of having one full-time nurse per school, teams of at least one registered nurse and one licensed practitioner nurse rotate among a "cluster" of four schools geographically close to one another. [The cluster model in DC schools requires school nurses to manage up to 875 students across multiple schools](#), leading to delays in care, overworking nurses, and increasing reliance on less qualified health technicians. Furthermore, the cluster model contradicts District's [the Public School Health Services Amendment Act of 2017](#), which requires one registered nurse or one licensed practitioner nurse be in each public school for a

minimum of 40 hours per week. The law is contingent on funding that the District government has not provided.

- The District faces a school nurse and health technician staffing crisis. While the cluster model was 90 percent staffed at the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year, the DC Nursing Association has stated that [25 nurses left the school nursing program between August 2023 and early 2024](#) – a staffing decline of 52 percent. And while the program expected to hire 120 health technicians for 2023-2024, as of November 28, 2023, they had only filled 67 vacancies, a 44 percent vacancy rate.
- The reduction in the number of full-time school registered nurses – [from 82 in School Year 2023-2024 to 44 in School Year 2024-2025](#) – along with replacing nurses with health technicians, has [delayed emergency responses and jeopardized chronic illness care](#). Failure to have a full-time nurse in every school increases risks to students with allergies, asthma, epilepsy, and other chronic conditions due to inadequate medical staffing and the challenges faced by school nurses in providing the necessary care under the current model. Earlier this year, [a kindergartner at Shepherd Elementary School suffered a severe allergic reaction at school](#), underscoring the need for fulltime registered nurse in every school and available to every student.
- DC Public Schools and public charter schools face significant workforce shortages due to noncompetitive salaries, causing [many nurses to leave for higher-paying positions](#) in hospitals, nursing homes, and other districts. District Department of Health data shows that DC school nurses earn an average of \$81,866, compared to nearby jurisdictions like Prince George's County (\$110,020), Howard County (\$100,776), Arlington County (\$98,727), and Fairfax County (\$87,663), with school nurses receiving substantially lower salaries than [average registered nurse salaries](#) ranging from \$118,000 to \$150,000. Competitive salaries, enhanced working conditions, and professional support are essential to attract and retain qualified school nurses, ensuring that all students have access to high-quality healthcare services during the school day.
- While there are nurse staffing challenges due at least in part to insufficient government funding, it is important to note that studies show that [having a full-time registered nurse has cost benefits](#) by saving money on medical care costs, parents' productivity loss, and teachers' productivity loss, emphasizing the need for and cost effectiveness of providing government funding to ensure every school has a registered nurse.
- Local healthcare organizations, parents, and students have [advocated for the American Academy of Pediatrics' standard of at least one full-time registered nurse to be implemented in DC Public Schools and public charter schools](#). Other Advisory Neighborhood Commissions, including [Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3E](#), have criticized the cluster model

for school nurses and called for the presence of at least one full time nurse at each school campus. Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B has previously advocated for equitable distribution of public health resources for schools, see [Resolution 4B-22-0103](#), Requesting the District of Columbia Provide High-Quality Masks to Schools and Other Communities in Need (Jan. 24, 2022); [Resolution 4B-21-1004](#), Supporting a Comprehensive Coronavirus Testing Program in DC Schools (Oct. 25, 2021), as well as other measures affecting school health. See generally [Resolution 4B-23-1102](#), Calling for Parity in Response to Rodent Infestations Across Private Residences Schools and Parks (Nov. 27, 2023).

- The Commission is thankful for work of the DC State Board of Education in unanimously approving [SR24-18: Advocating for Enhanced School Nurse Staffing and Support in DC School](#) and their related proposed legislation – the “[Universal Public School Nurses for Safer Students Amendment Act of 2024](#)” – which calls for full-time nurses in every DC public school and public charter school during normal and extended school hours. This proposed legislation is more robust and better meets public health needs than the [Public School Health Services Amendment Act of 2024](#), introduced in February 2024, which would require only 30 hours per week of nursing “coverage.” The State Board of Education’s Resolution also calls for DC Health to estimate the cost of offering school nurses more competitive salaries; greater funding in the Children’s School Services Program grant to increase school nurse staffing; inquiry into whether current grants are limiting on-site health care professionals from providing services they are qualified to provide; creation of a student loan repayment program for school nurses; and local efforts to promote interest in the school nursing vocation.

RESOLVED:

- That Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B strongly supports the DC State Board of Education’s [SR24-18: Advocating for Enhanced School Nurse Staffing and Support in DC School](#) and the proposed “[Universal Public School Nurses for Safer Students Amendment Act of 2024](#)” and calls for a full-time, 40-hour per-week nurse in every DC public school and public charter school during normal and extended school hours.
- That Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B further supports the DC State Board of Education’s [SR24-18: Advocating for Enhanced School Nurse Staffing and Support in DC School](#) and the measures to enhance school nurse staffing, including calling for:
 - the DC government to sufficiently fund increased staffing for every DC public school and public charter school through the DC Health Children’s School Services Program grant;

- the Department of Health to provide a cost estimate of the funds required to be added to the School Health Services Program to ensure competitive salaries and benefits are paid to attract and retain school nurses;
- the DC Council add statutory language, modeled after the DC Health Professional Recruitment Program, for student loan repayment for nurses given it is a high-need healthcare profession; and
- the University of the District of Columbia enhance programmatic opportunities for school nurses by building partnerships with DC public and public charter high schools and Local Education Agencies to cultivate interest in the profession.

FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the Commission designates Commissioner Erin Palmer, ANC 4B02, Commissioner Evan Yeats, ANC 4B04, Commissioner Alison Brooks, ANC 4B08, and Commissioner Zurick T. Smith, ANC 4B03, to represent the Commission in all matters relating to this Resolution.

FURTHER RESOLVED:

That, in the event the designated representative Commissioners cannot carry out their representative duties for any reason, the Commission authorizes the Chair to designate another Commissioner to represent the Commission in all matter relating to this Resolution.

FURTHER RESOLVED:

That, consistent with DC Code § 1-309, only actions of the full Commission voting in a properly noticed public meeting have standing and carry great weight. The actions, positions, and opinions of individual commissioners, insofar as they may be contradictory to or otherwise inconsistent with the expressed position of the full Commission in a properly adopted resolution or letter, have no standing and cannot be considered as in any way associated with the Commission.

ADOPTED by voice vote at a regular public meeting (notice of which was properly given, and at which a quorum of seven members was present) on October 28, 2024, by a vote of 7 yes, 0 no, 0 abstentions.