

TESTIMONY of a PARENT and an UNEMPLOYED SCHOOL NURSE

As a **PARENT** new to both Mequon and Wisconsin, I was shocked and appalled to learn that our school district has only two part time school nurses for the entire district. We moved to Wisconsin from New Hampshire due to my husband's job relocation and we picked Mequon, because the research we did regarding schools indicated that Mequon was rated very high. Our daughter, who is adopted from China, started school knowing absolutely no one. She is doing very well academically, but each day she comes home from school and talks about the social issues of meeting new friends. Often she asked me "What should I do if I don't feel well, because I don't think my school has a nurse?" It was after a month into the school year that I learned about the minimal coverage of school nursing in our school system. The adjustment has been so stressful for our daughter that she developed Shingles and had to be seen at Urgent Care. I am certain that if the school nurse was available more frequently in the health office that this condition would have been spotted much earlier and by consulting with her it would have been identified more easily.

Based on my experience as a parent in New Hampshire, I know there are many children who need ongoing monitoring for chronic conditions such as asthma or seizure disorders. Frequently, children in our old neighborhood needed the services of the school nurse when they had pneumonia, bronchitis, sore throats, and other respiratory illnesses. The nurse who was full time (at an approximate ratio of one nurse per 500 students) became familiar with the children and knew what was normal behavior for those children and when they were exhibiting signs of impending illness. One of my daughter's friends experienced several fractures in her leg and the nurse was instrumental in helping her with adaptations for crutches.

As an **UNEMPLOYED SCHOOL NURSE**, I am extremely frustrated to find out about the scarcity of jobs available in school nursing. Prior to moving, I was working part time in a small public school in a combined position of School Nurse for grades 1 to 8 and Health Teacher for grades 5 to 8. The School Board recognized the value of having a nurse and created the combination position as a way to budget for the position even though there were only 100 students in the school. On the opposite end of the spectrum, I also worked part time for the prestigious private school Phillips Exeter Academy (with a nursing staff of about 15 nurses), providing nursing assessments and infirmary care for approximately 1000 high school students.

In addition to being a school nurse, I am also a Certified Diabetes Educator (CDE) and know that there are many students with Type 1 Diabetes needing frequent blood sugar monitoring and having episodes of hypoglycemia. I know that my background in Diabetes has been especially beneficial for those students with Diabetes. Here in Wisconsin, my Diabetes knowledge and skills are going to waste because of the lack of school nursing positions. I had expected that being an experienced school nurse with a Masters Degree and a CDE, that, at the very least, there would be many opportunities to be a substitute nurse (which, by the way, is very common in NH). So far, I have found little to no evidence of any possibility of employment. Please think of all those students with Type 1 Diabetes and all the overweight emerging Type 2 students who could benefit from my involvement when you are considering school funding.

I am writing this testimony to appeal to you to create more funding for School Nursing positions throughout the state of Wisconsin. If there is anything that I can do to help further this cause, I would be more than happy to work toward supporting more health care in the school systems.