



## **Hundreds Sign Petition Calling for a School Nurse in Every Wisconsin School**

Demonstrating their support for the idea that every student in Wisconsin deserves access to a school nurse, nearly 600 people have thus far signed a petition saying that plans to open schools must include an expansion of school nurses. The petition calls for a school nurse in every school in Wisconsin. Unfortunately, many schools in the state do not currently have a school nurse and some school districts do not have a single school nurse. When a school district decides it is safe to reopen its buildings, it needs to make sure that each school has a school nurse.

“Although there are 2,190 public schools in Wisconsin, there are only 603 school nurse positions reported to the state,” the petition reads. “Not all of those nurses are full time. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends at least one school nurse in every school. The National Association of School Nurses asserts that every student needs direct access to a school nurse.”

“School re-entry is crucial for parents and guardians to go back to work,” the petition continues. “Having children at home and out of the classroom has caused undue economic and mental stress for families. Adding school nurses to schools across the state provides a key solution to help parents and the economy reopen. For schools to address the ongoing pandemic, school nurses need to be in place when schools reopen and are central to the discussions of what the 2020-2021 school year will look like.

“When schools reopen it is imperative that school nurses - frontline healthcare providers - are present so that students can be healthy and safe at school, especially due to the presence of COVID-19 and the upcoming flu season. School nurses provide essential infectious disease surveillance, identification and intervention for student physical and mental health concerns, health screenings, school located vaccinations, and immunization compliance efforts. We know that keeping students in school will have tremendous implications for the economy, workforce, and families.

“As you consider efforts needed to further reopen the economy, please consider school nurses as a key part of enabling parents to return to work and students to be safe at school.”

The Wisconsin Association of School Nurses (WASN) notes that much of the federal COVID-19 funding that school districts have received can be used to fund the hiring of school nurses. Wisconsin school districts have received more than \$221 million through the CARES Act, and Congress is considering more. WASN's position is that school districts need to invest some of this money in more school nurses to help ensure the safety of students attending school in person.

WASN Legislative Committee Chair Mary Jo Beining, a school nurse in the Ashwaubenon School District, said it's time to recognize the importance of school nurses. “School nurses are on the front lines of our education and health care systems,” Beining said. “School nurses play an essential role in keeping students healthy, safe and ready to learn. Now more than ever, it is time to get more school nurses in schools across the state.”