



The Honorable Jeremiah W. (Jay) Nixon  
Governor of Missouri  
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(573) 751-3222

06/25/2010

Dear Governor Nixon:

Thank you for your past support of the School Health Grant Program and School Nurses. In the past, Missouri has been a leader among other states regarding school health. With your help, we have worked hard to ensure that children are healthy, safe, and attending school to become successful, productive members of society. We are writing to ask that you exempt the School Health Grant Program from any State budget cuts for 2010-11.

We recognize with today's economic issues that you have had to make some extremely difficult decisions. However, we have concerns regarding the dissolution of the School Health Grant Program. Dissolution of this program will remove 400 school nurse health professionals from 279 school districts resulting in a devastating impact on the health and safety of over 270,000 school children across our state. For many children, the school nurse is their first and sometimes ONLY access to health care and referral, counseling, health screenings such as vision and hearing, scoliosis, dental, blood pressure, and assessment of communicable diseases. This is especially true for Missouri's already underserved population.

School Nurses provide a variety of services from first aid, illness management, emergency care for life threatening situations, community referrals, health education, case management such as in teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, diabetes management, asthma management, tube feedings, catheterizations, tracheotomy care, and the list goes on and on. School Nurses were desperately needed during this past year's H1N1 and influenza outbreak. Administrators expressed over and over again that they were grateful for their school nurse during that time of crisis. School districts saw improved attendance and thus a decrease in medical absences as a result of H1N1 vaccine programs. This equaled more opportunities for students to be in the classroom and learning.

As you know, health directly impacts the quality and quantity of educational success. There are many critical health issues that overburdened school districts will not be able to address without the presence of the school nurse. We ask you to consider the following:

- Who will ensure that controlled substances are given safely and correctly at school?
- Who will ensure immunization compliance mandated by the State of Missouri?
- Who will monitor and manage children who have come back to school after being hospitalized for a mental illness, heavily medicated and needing periodic contact with physicians for behavior management?
- Who will case manage insulin dependent diabetics, especially if they are not familiar with how their body reacts to glucose levels? For instance, a lay person may think a child is not playing because they are tired, or they are behaving poorly—when in reality their blood sugar could be 20 or 500. Either one could be a life threatening emergency.
- Who will assist diabetic children in calculating carbohydrate ratios and ensure they receive the correct dose of insulin at meal and snack times?
- Who will PROPERLY manage children with food allergies, the new food allergy law, EpiPens for breathing emergencies, and emergency medication such as Diastat for severe seizure disorders?
- Who will safely assess and treat a breathing emergency by an asthmatic child when they are not getting relief from their inhaler, parents cannot be contacted, and home phones are out of order?

These are just a few of the concerns the Missouri Association of School Nurses has for the children across the state. Children, families, and School Nurses in this state look to you for guidance and count on you for your support.

State budget cuts are extremely difficult to make; however, this particular budget reduction is so much more than program suspension and dissolution. It directly affects the lives of Missouri's school children. We also understand that administration is working with districts to generate additional Medicaid funding for schools. However, the school nurse plays a vital role in generating those funds through individual case management. For any expansion to take place, the school nurse would need to be retained. School districts cannot afford to retain the school nurse position without funding through the School Health Grant Program. We strongly urge you to exempt the School Health Grant from State funding cuts. At minimum, give school districts, DHSS and others an opportunity for the 2010-11 school year to look at alternative funding opportunities for sustainability.

To further support the continuance of funding, please find attached the Missouri Inventory of Special Health Care Needs for the 2008-09 school year. When the 2009-10 inventories are available through the Missouri DHSS, we would be happy to forward to you as well.

Thank you for your consideration and your support of Missouri School Nurses and Missouri school children. Please let us know how we can help you assure that ALL children can attend school and be healthy and safe.

Sincerely,

Missouri Association of School Nurses  
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