

FACT SHEET



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Supporting Student Health and Achievement: RNs and APRNs

Problem: Despite the fact that every teacher knows that a sick child will struggle to learn, **the current lack of explicit state support for a Registered Nurse (RN) or an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) in schools encourages the redirection of funding towards instruction and away from health.** To quote the former Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders, "You can't educate a child who isn't healthy, and you can't keep a child healthy who isn't educated." This is a bill to clarify that health, (physical and mental), and education go hand in hand and that certain licensed providers (RNs and APRNs) are critical to meet the current need.

The Virginia School Safety Audit Program¹ survey reveals mental health as a top concern for Virginia Schools. There is a youth mental health crisis and school nurses provide preventive help by recognizing early psychological distress.²

Today's school staff work with kids that have complex medical needs. An RN's scope of practice includes working to independently to assess, plan, and implement patient care. An RN can interpret medical records and write a plan of care for a health plan that is a part of a IEP/504. While few schools currently use APRNs, as more schools in health deserts build partnerships with local health care entities to create school-based health centers, it will be critical to expand access to a broader scope of care.

Policy solution: The At Risk Add On is an existing funding formula in the General Assembly budget designed to help the schools with the most need. The current formula does not explicitly address the physical and mental health of the student. To address

this, pass a bill to add specific language about supporting a student's physical and mental health and add RNs/APRNs to the list of approved expenditures for the at-risk-add-on

Costs: None. This bill is permissive. Local school boards decide how to use their allotted funding. This gives explicit permission to use this funding to support school health.

Who benefits: Everyone. Access to providers that improve a student's physical and mental health and achievement will increase classroom and ultimately, community health. Our students are our future.

¹ <https://www.dcs.virginia.gov/virginia-center-school-and-campus-safety/virginia-school-safety-audit-program>

² <https://news.virginia.edu/content/theres-youth-mental-health-crisis-school-nurses-can-help>

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