DNA
DELAWARE NURSES ASSOCIATION

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Norine Watson, RN, MSN, NEA-BC
*President*
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February 2, 2010

Charlie Michels
Executive Director
Delaware Professional Standards Board
401 Federal Street Suite 2
Dover, DE 19901

Subject: BSN Requirement for a Delaware Public School Nurse

Dear Mr. Michels,

As Delaware's state nurses association representing all registered nurses, the Delaware Nurses Association opposes the change in educational requirement for a public school nurse as listed in the 14 DE Admin Code 1582 School Nurse.

The Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing emphasizes key areas of nursing theory, the use of evidence-based research in nursing practice, and exposure to settings and areas of practice such as community/public health, acute and chronic care. A strong foundation in liberal arts and sciences strengthens the analytical and critical thinking skills needed for the nurse to provide safe, culturally competent care. It is these skills and education that prepare the nurse to develop process improvements that address medical errors and other challenges in the delivery of care as well as leadership skills that enable them to independently manage health offices and patient caseloads.

School nurses play a vital role in the education system. With the passing of national legislation that removed barriers that hindered health impaired students from attending public schools, school nurses are challenged each day to meet the health care needs of these students. The increasing complexity of technology, medications and treatments and chronic health conditions (in all age groups) underscores the need to have a BSN prepared nurse in the school setting. Further, the school nurse is often the sole medical professional available on site to provide guidance and education to the administrators, teachers and students and to address any medical emergency or crisis.

The American Nurses Association's Scope and Standards of Practice for School Nursing states that because of the complexity of issues addressed by the school nurse, the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) recommends as the minimum education

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for a school nurse a baccalaureate degree in nursing (BSN)[1]. Our state's Board of Nursing also supports the BSN as a minimum requirement for safe, professional nursing practice. With the pressure on the healthcare system and the ever expanding responsibilities of nursing, there is a growing body of nursing research that supports the positive outcomes of BSN prepared nurses in all practice settings.

Reducing the minimum requirement of a BSN for school nurses would deprive the students of Delaware the "gold standard" of nursing. There is no organization or refereed publication that has ever recommended changing the BSN to an alternative degree thereby lowering the requirements for practice.

The Delaware Nurses Association strongly recommends that the Professional Standards Board maintain the educational requirement for public school nurses to have a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing.

Sincerely,

Norine Watson, MSN, RN, NEA-BC

Norine Watson, MSN, RN
President

Sarah J Carmody

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Executive Director

[1] American Nurses Association and National Association of School Nurses. 2005. Scope and Standards of Practice-School Nursing, page 4