

1           **CONCURRENT RESOLUTION REGARDING MENTAL HEALTH**  
2   **SUPPORT IN SCHOOLS**

3   2023 GENERAL SESSION

4   STATE OF UTAH

5   **Chief Sponsor: Steve Eliason**

6   Senate Sponsor: Ann Millner

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8   **LONG TITLE**

9   **General Description:**

10           This resolution recognizes the crucial contributions of school nurses, psychologists,  
11   social workers, and counselors in Utah schools.

12   **Highlighted Provisions:**

13           This resolution:

- 14           ▶ highlights the critical role of school nurses, psychologists, social workers, and  
15   counselors in education;
- 16           ▶ recognizes the inadequacy of current funding streams to meet demand for  
17   school-based mental health professionals;
- 18           ▶ supports the creation and adoption of school formulas for staffing school-based  
19   mental health professionals at appropriate levels; and
- 20           ▶ commits to exploring legislative options for increased funding allocations for  
21   school-based mental health positions.

22   **Special Clauses:**

23           None

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25   *Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah, the Governor concurring therein:*

26           WHEREAS, the Legislature recognizes that school nurses, school social workers,  
27   school psychologists, and school counselors are uniquely qualified to provide essential  
28   supports that address the physical, social, and emotional needs of students;

29           WHEREAS, all children and youth learn best when they are healthy, supported, and

30 receive an education that meets their individual needs, schools can more effectively ensure that  
31 all students are ready and able to learn if schools meet all the needs of each student, and  
32 learning and development are directly linked to the physical and mental health of children and a  
33 supportive learning environment is an optimal place to promote physical and mental health;

34 WHEREAS, the school-based mental health professionals create a strong support for  
35 students by directly working with parents and families and connecting parents, families, and  
36 students with community resources outside the school system;

37 WHEREAS, the State of Utah has a shortage of all of the professionals listed in this  
38 resolution, and as of the 2021-2022 school year:

39 ▶ the ratio of school psychologists to students in Utah was 1:2,114  
40 students, while the national recommendation is 1:500-700;

41 ▶ the ratio of school social workers to students in Utah was 1:2,443, while  
42 the national recommendation is 1:250;

43 ▶ the ratio of school nurses to students in Utah was 1:2,445, while the  
44 national recommendation is one for each school, and the Utah  
45 recommendation is 1:2,000; and

46 ▶ the ratio of school counselors to students in Utah was 1:503, while the  
47 national recommendation is 1:250, and the Utah recommendation is  
48 1:350;

49 WHEREAS, school psychologists are specially trained to deliver mental health services  
50 and academic support that lower barriers to learning and allow teachers to teach more  
51 effectively; school psychologists use sound psychological principles which are critical to  
52 proper instruction and learning, social and emotional development, prevention and early  
53 intervention, and support for a culturally diverse student population; school psychologists  
54 facilitate collaboration that helps parents and educators to identify and reduce risk factors,  
55 promote protective factors, create safe schools, and access community resources; and school  
56 psychologists are trained to assess barriers to learning, utilize data-based decision making,  
57 implement research-driven prevention and intervention strategies, evaluate outcomes, and

58 improve accountability;

59 WHEREAS, school social workers are trained mental health professionals especially  
60 skilled in providing services to students who face serious challenges to school success,  
61 including disability, poverty, discrimination, abuse, neglect, mental illness, homelessness,  
62 bullying, familial stressors, and other barriers to learning; school social workers, being licensed  
63 mental health professionals in schools in the United States, are a vital link between the home,  
64 school, and community by providing necessary assessments, interventions, counseling, family  
65 outreach, and community referrals; and school social workers maintain knowledge of school  
66 culture and school climate, which are necessary for responsible school safety planning;

67 WHEREAS, school nurses are registered professional school nurses that advance the  
68 well-being, academic success, and life-long achievements of all students by serving the school  
69 community and providing a critical safety net for our state's children; school nurses provide  
70 support and direct care to students with acute injuries and chronic health conditions through  
71 care management, advocacy, and coordination; school nurses are often the first to identify  
72 behavioral health concerns and families in crisis; school nurses act as a liaison to the school  
73 community, parents, and health care providers on behalf of children's health by promoting  
74 wellness and improving health outcomes for our community's children; and school nurses, as  
75 members of school-based mental health teams, understand the link between health and learning  
76 and are in a position to make a positive difference for children every day;

77 WHEREAS, school counselors recognize and respond to the need for mental health  
78 services that promote social/emotional wellness and development for all students; school  
79 counselors advocate for the mental health needs of all students by offering instruction that  
80 enhances awareness of mental health, appraisal, and advisement addressing academic, career,  
81 and social/emotional development, short-term counseling interventions, and referrals to  
82 community resources for long-term support; school counselors perform a wide range of duties  
83 to help students excel academically, develop resiliency, adjust socially, and cope with  
84 school-related and personal concerns or problems both in and out of school; school counselors  
85 help develop well-rounded students by guiding students through academic learning, social and

86 emotional development, and career exploration; school counselors play a vital role in ensuring  
87 that students are ready for both college and careers; and school counselors coordinate efforts to  
88 foster a positive school climate, resulting in a safe learning environment for all students;

89 WHEREAS, the Legislature recognizes that school nurses, school social workers,  
90 school psychologists, and school counselors are uniquely qualified to provide essential  
91 supports that address the physical, social, and emotional needs of students;

92 WHEREAS, the need for comprehensive student support has grown beyond what is  
93 currently funded in the prototypical school model, and the need for these professionals in  
94 schools has grown beyond what is currently available for staffing and hiring availability;

95 WHEREAS, the Legislature recognizes that solving a shortage problem in these  
96 multiple fields will require a multifaceted response; action and problem solving will need to  
97 address training program funding, training program increased capacity, payment structures that  
98 incentivize and honor professionals to work and stay working in school systems, models of  
99 school-based mental health services to best utilize all professionals, ensuring professionals are  
100 able to work within their appropriate domains, creative funding solutions, and taking advantage  
101 of all funding opportunities to support intentional efforts to solve this issue; more than one  
102 solution will be necessary, and solutions will need to be collaboratively created with all  
103 stakeholders; and we cannot wait for one solution before working towards another, otherwise  
104 we continue to be stuck in a loop of inaction;

105 WHEREAS, current funding streams do not support appropriate hiring of school-based  
106 mental health professionals, and the opening of other funding streams, such as general  
107 education funds, would more accurately represent student needs and support hiring of  
108 school-based mental health professionals; and

109 WHEREAS, while certain school-based mental health professionals have codified  
110 ratios in place, others do not; having a codified ratio is a step in the right direction, and each  
111 school-based mental health profession should have a codified ratio; however, ratios are of little  
112 practical use if local education agencies (LEAs) are not able to or choose not to use multiple  
113 streams of funding to pay for professionals; ongoing funding is needed to meet the ratio rules

114 that already exist or should be created; and codified ratios help to guide LEAs in appropriate  
115 staffing decisions:

116         NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah, the  
117 Governor concurring therein, supports the creation and adoption of school formulas for staffing  
118 physical, social, and emotional support in schools to meet staffing ratio recommendations for  
119 school nurses, school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists.

120         BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor honor and  
121 recognize the contributions of school nurses, school counselors, school social workers, and  
122 school psychologists in providing social and emotional support and health services to K-12  
123 students across the state of Utah.

124         BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor commit to  
125 exploring legislation to provide increased allocations to LEAs that demonstrate they have hired  
126 staff for these roles or have a need for hiring to meet appropriate ratios in anticipation that  
127 enhanced state funding will allow school districts to hire additional school nurses, school social  
128 workers, school psychologists, and school counselors.

129         BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor commit to  
130 exploring increased funding to increase the number of school nurses, school counselors, school  
131 social workers, and school psychologists providing social and emotional support and health  
132 services to K-12 students across the state by adopting a formula for the distribution of a basic  
133 education instructional allocation for each LEA.

134         BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor support exploring  
135 the codification of appropriate ratios for all professions if they are not already in statute.

136         BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor commit to  
137 funding for training programs to increase student capacity and explore ways that training  
138 programs can access necessary supports, funding, and personnel to increase training of future  
139 professionals.

140         BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor commit to  
141 furthering retention and attraction of professionals to the school system and finding related

142 retention and attraction solutions.

143           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor commit to  
144 exploring salary and payment of professionals compared to other educators and professionals  
145 working in the private sector and to generating ideas to make payment equitable and attractive.

146           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor commit to  
147 exploring professionals' scope of practice and structures of school-based mental health services  
148 to ensure that professionals are being used in the appropriate capacity and are able to function  
149 in their specific domains that support their retention in school systems and best services  
150 delivered to students.