

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

2023 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Steve Eliason

Senate Sponsor: _____

LONG TITLE

General Description:

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

Highlighted Provisions:

This resolution:

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

Special Clauses:

None

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

WHEREAS, the Legislature recognizes that school nurses, social workers, psychologists, and school counselors are uniquely qualified to provide essential supports that



28 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;

31 WHEREAS, schools can more effectively ensure that all students are ready and able to
32 learn if schools meet all the needs of each student;

33 WHEREAS, learning and development are directly linked to the physical and mental
34 health of children and a supportive learning environment is an optimal place to promote
35 physical and mental health;

36 WHEREAS, school psychologists are specially trained to deliver mental health services
37 and academic support that lower barriers to learning and allow teachers to teach more
38 effectively;

39 WHEREAS, sound psychological principles are critical to proper instruction and
40 learning, social and emotional development, prevention and early intervention, and support for
41 a culturally diverse student population;

42 WHEREAS, school psychologists facilitate collaboration that helps parents and
43 educators to identify and reduce risk factors, promote protective factors, create safe schools,
44 and access community resources;

45 WHEREAS, school psychologists are trained to assess barriers to learning, utilize
46 data-based decision making, implement research-driven prevention and intervention strategies,
47 evaluate outcomes, and improve accountability;

48 WHEREAS, school social workers are trained mental health professionals especially
49 skilled in providing services to students who face serious challenges to school success,
50 including disability, poverty, discrimination, abuse, neglect, mental illness, homelessness,
51 bullying, familial stressors, and other barriers to learning;

52 WHEREAS, school social workers, as licensed mental health professionals in United
53 States schools, provide a vital link between the home, school, and community through
54 necessary assessments, interventions, counseling, family outreach, and community referrals;

55 WHEREAS, school social workers maintain knowledge of school culture and school
56 climate, which are necessary for responsible school safety planning;

57 WHEREAS, school nurses are registered professional nurses that advance the
58 well-being, academic success, and life-long achievements of all students by serving the school

59 community and providing a critical safety net for our state's children;

60 WHEREAS, school nurses are often the first to identify behavioral health concerns and
61 families in crisis;

62 WHEREAS, school nurses provide support and direct care to students with acute
63 injuries and chronic health conditions through care management, advocacy, and coordination;

64 WHEREAS, school nurses act as a liaison between the school community, parents, and
65 health care providers on behalf of children's health by promoting wellness and improving
66 health outcomes for our community's children;

67 WHEREAS, school nurses are members of school-based mental health teams,
68 understand the link between health and learning, and are in a position to make a positive
69 difference for children every day;

70 WHEREAS, school counselors perform a wide range of duties to help students excel
71 academically, develop resiliency, adjust socially, and cope with school-related and personal
72 concerns or problems both in and out of school;

73 WHEREAS, school counselors help develop well-rounded students by guiding students
74 through academic learning, social and emotional development, and career exploration;

75 WHEREAS, school counselors play a vital role in ensuring that students are ready for
76 both college and careers;

77 WHEREAS, school counselors assist with and coordinate efforts to foster a positive
78 school climate, resulting in a safe learning environment for all students;

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

82 WHEREAS, the need for comprehensive student support has grown beyond what is
83 currently funded in the prototypical school model and current funding streams do not support
84 appropriate hiring of school-based mental health professionals;

85 WHEREAS, the opening of other funding streams such as general education funds
86 would more accurately represent student needs and support hiring of school-based mental
87 health professionals;

88 WHEREAS, while certain school-based mental health professionals have codified
89 ratios in place, others do not;

90 WHEREAS, the staffing decisions of local education agencies (LEAs) would benefit
91 from having codified ratios established for each school-based mental health profession; and

92 WHEREAS, LEAs are presently unable to choose among or use multiple funding
93 streams to pay for professionals, undermining ratio rules that currently exist and those that
94 should be created:

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

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

103 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor commit to
104 exploring legislation to provide increased allocations to LEAs that demonstrate they have hired
105 staff for these roles or have a need for hiring to meet appropriate ratios and anticipate that
106 enhanced state funding will allow school districts to hire additional school nurses, social
107 workers, psychologists, and counselors.

108 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor commit to
109 exploring increased funding to expand the number of school nurses, counselors, social workers,
110 and psychologists providing social emotional support and health services to K-12 students
111 across the state by adopting a formula for the distribution of a basic education instructional
112 allocation for each LEA.

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