

Representative Steve Eliason proposes the following substitute bill:

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION REGARDING MENTAL HEALTH

SUPPORT IN SCHOOLS

2023 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Steve Eliason

Senate Sponsor: Ann Millner

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:



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 students, while the
40 national recommendation is 1:500-700;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

87 WHEREAS, the Legislature recognizes that school nurses, school social workers,

88 school psychologists, and school counselors are uniquely qualified to provide essential
89 supports that address the physical, social, and emotional needs of students;

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

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

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

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

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

118 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor honor and

119 recognize the contributions of school nurses, school counselors, school social workers, and
120 school psychologists in providing social and emotional support and health services to K-12
121 students across the state of Utah.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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