

March 11, 2010

Dear Editor,

As part of his plan to deal with the state's projected budget shortfall, Gov. Jack Markell has proposed eliminating state funding for nurses in private schools.

However, as a member of the Joint Finance Committee that will craft the state's operating budget, I believe this proposal is short-sighted and could potentially cost far more than it saves, both in terms of money and the negative impact it'll have on public health.

School nurses help curtail the spread of diseases (including flu and other highly-communicable illnesses) through the student and staff population – preventing the disruption of education and saving countless man-hours of lost productivity.

School nurses may also be able to spot potential problems in students, alerting their parents and doctors to previously unknown health issues. Not only does earlier detection and treatment reduce the cost of healthcare, it also increases the chances of a satisfactory outcome.

Additionally, a school without a nurse could be opening itself up to liability issues resulting from the lack of a trained healthcare professional to help administer treatment and medication to students with chronic conditions.

On another note, there is an issue of fairness the must be considered. Delawareans who send their children to private schools are still paying their share of school taxes to support public institutions. The state funding of school nurses is not only good public health policy; it provides some equity to these taxpayers.

School nurses perform an important function in safeguarding the health of the people in schools they serve and the communities in which those institutions are located. I believe their role in fighting the spread of illnesses and the early detection of potential health issues not only justifies their expense, but provides a healthy return on investment.

Cutting state funding for private school nurses may be cheered by those with a "sock it to the rich" mentality, but as an issue of public and fiscal policy, it's an ill-considered idea.

Sincerely

Joe Miro  
State Representative  
22<sup>nd</sup> District

