

Testimony in support of SB 2235

Senate Education Committee

Jan 26, 2021

Dear Chairman Schaible and members of the Education Committee,

My name is Katie Stewart and I am testifying today in support of SB 2235 as a concerned parent. I am the mom to three daughters, and we have been actively enrolled in the Bismarck Public School System since 2013. For the first four years, we had little interaction with our school nurse and certainly didn't realize the importance of having one on staff full-time.

In 2017, we were delivered the devastating news that our Kindergarten daughter was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes. This came as a huge shock and changed our lives forever. We quickly became extremely overwhelmed by the 24-hour management necessary to sustain a healthy child! Our daughter spent 4 days in the hospital while her blood sugar dropped to a level that would be safe enough to bring her home. As we started to find our new normal, we reached out to the elementary school to learn how her medical treatment would be managed while she wasn't under our direct care.

We were very surprised to learn that our elementary school that was home to over 500 students, had a nurse on-site for less than 50% of the school week! This same nurse was responsible for floating between 3 different schools. Our daughter was only 5 and needed close supervision throughout the day. She needed her blood sugar checked at least 3-4 times a day, needed someone to administer insulin for every snack and lunch, and needed immediate action if her blood sugar would drop to a dangerous low!

Fortunately for us, the head of the Bismarck Public Schools Nursing Program and our assigned nurse were as accommodating as they possibly could be, but it was clear that government funding was an issue. There was not enough money available to have a nurse on-site full-time. My daughter demanded more attention from the school nurse than the average student, but we quickly learned how important it was to advocate for a full-time nurse at every Bismarck Public School, especially the elementary schools housing children that are much more dependent on an adult to provide care in times of need.

Because of our daughter's diagnosis, we have developed tight relationships with her school nurse and her team of other supervisors and have seen firsthand how "in-demand" the school nurse is! Type 1 Diabetes can become life threatening very quickly under certain circumstances and it would be much more comforting to know that there was a trained medical provider on site the entire school day; not to mention the randomness of school accidents, broken bones, allergic reactions, bloody noses, upset stomachs and the like. It is not fair to expect our overburdened teachers and non-medically trained staff to attend to all these circumstances that arise with our school-aged children.

Thank you for your consideration. It is with sincere passion that I support our Bismarck Public School nurses and will be forever grateful for their incredible care! I'd humbly ask for a DO PASS to promote healthy learning for our BPS students and peace of mind for their families!

Sincerely,

Katie Stewart