

AUSTIN DAVIS, MEMBER
DEPUTY WHIP
35TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT
G-07 IRVIS OFFICE BUILDING
P.O. BOX 202035
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120-2035
(717) 783-1018
FAX: (717) 780-4779

627 LYSLE BOULEVARD
MCKEESPORT, PENNSYLVANIA 15132
(412) 664-0035
FAX: (412) 664-0039

3910 MAIN STREET, SUITE 5
MUNHALL, PENNSYLVANIA 15120
(412) 476-3046
FAX: (412) 476-3048

551 RAVENSBURG BOULEVARD
CLAIRTON, PENNSYLVANIA 15025
(412) 233-2505
FAX: (412) 233-2507



House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

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MEMORANDUM

To: All Members of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives
From: Representative Austin Davis
Date: August 24, 2019
Subject: School Nurses Legislation

Our schools will be relying on nurses more than ever as they return to full or partial in-person instruction. Yet, many schools cannot afford to have a nurse in every building. This is unacceptable and the unfortunate result of an outdated and inequitable state reimbursement methodology. My bill will end the eroding state support for school health services and enable our schools to properly invest in nurses during this pandemic.

It has been nearly 30 years since the state's per-student reimbursement rate for school health services was updated. Cumulatively, inflation from that time has grown 89.3%. This has caused the state's average reimbursement share to drop from 44% of costs in 1991 to about 18% of costs today. It is time for the state to start paying its fair share of its mandated health services and screenings.

The Public School Code requires nine health services, including medical and dental health examination, vision and hearing screening tests, height and weight measurement, tuberculosis tests, threshold screening tests and special examinations. Since 1991, the state has provided up to a \$21.10 per-student reimbursement (capped at actual costs) broken out as follows: \$1.60 for medical, \$2.80 for dental, \$7.00 for nursing services, and \$9.70 for the flexible "Act 25" reimbursement.

Collectively, to date schools received state reimbursements of \$33.8 million in FY 2019-2020. However, if these rates would have grown with inflation, schools would have received \$40.61 per student or about \$69.7 million. My bill realigns and then annually adjusts the reimbursement rates based upon the change in the consumer price index, and it gives schools the flexibility to apply these funds toward the health services where they are most needed. It utilizes the number of students in poverty as an equity component to lessen the nurse to student ratio disparities.

Finally, my bill increases the transparency of this program by requiring the Department of Health to publicly post the distributions.

Please join me in supporting this formula increase to a level that will allow our schools to invest in school health services that will help keep our children safe as they return to school in whatever individualized way that occurs.