

LFC Requester:	Liu
-----------------------	------------

**AGENCY BILL ANALYSIS
2022 REGULAR SESSION**

WITHIN 24 HOURS OF BILL POSTING, EMAIL ANALYSIS TO:

LFC@NMLEGIS.GOV

and

DFA@STATE.NM.US

{Include the bill no. in the email subject line, e.g., HB2, and only attach one bill analysis and related documentation per email message}

SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION

{Indicate if analysis is on an original bill, amendment, substitute or a correction of a previous bill}

Check all that apply:

Original **Amendment**
Correction **Substitute**

Date January 21, 2022
Bill No: SB58

Sponsor: Sen. Stefanics

Agency Name and Code Number: PED - 924

Short Title: Increase School Nurses

Person Writing John Sena
Phone 505-570-7816 **Email:** John.sena@state.nm.us

SECTION II: FISCAL IMPACT

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY22	FY23		
	\$1,000.0	Nonrecurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

REVENUE (dollars in thousands)

Estimated Revenue			Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY22	FY23	FY24		
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY22	FY23	FY24	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
Total	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Duplicates/Conflicts with/Companion to/Relates to: N/A
Duplicates/Relates to Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act

SECTION III: NARRATIVE

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis: Senate Bill 58 (SB58) would appropriate \$1 million to the Public Education Department (PED) to increase the number of school nurses. The bill defines a “school nurse” as “a person who:

- 1) is a nurse authorized pursuant to the Nursing Practice Act to practice as a professional registered nurse;
- 2) is licensed by the PED and the Board of Nursing as a school nurse; and
- 3) provides services as a school nurse at a school.”

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

SB68 appropriates \$1 million from the general fund to the PED for expenditure in FY23 to increase the number of school nurses. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY23 shall revert to the general fund.

Unlike salaries for teachers and school principals, school nursing salary minimums are not statutorily defined, nor is there defined funding for school nurses. School districts use a variety of funding sources, including operational funds from the state equalization guarantee (SEG), to cover the cost of school nurse salaries. Because of this, school nurse salaries also vary between school districts and charter schools. In New Mexico, full-time nurses earn an average annual salary of \$47,213, excluding benefits. Based on information provided by school districts, the department estimates there are 18 school districts without a full-time nurse. Based on statewide averages, hiring full-time nurses for those school districts would mean an annual cost of approximately \$849,834. However, the cost of recruiting nurses in rural, hard-to-staff areas of the state may be higher than in urban areas, increasing this cost slightly.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Personnel Shortages. Due to a lack of registered nurses, particularly in rural areas, it is common for school districts to contract nursing services through Regional Education Cooperatives (RECs), sharing full-time school nurse positions with other small school districts. School districts employ supervised licensed practical nurses, health assistants, and contracted nurses in addition to – or in lieu of – registered nurses. According to the Annual School Health Services Report (ASHSR), a report developed by PED in collaboration with the New Mexico Department of Health (DOH), 18 of 88 school districts – approximately one out of five – had less than one full-time registered school nurse (only 88 of the 89 school districts submitted data for the ASHSR) during the 2019-2020 school year. Of the 18 school districts without a full-time nurse,

four reported having no school nurse at all.

The Covid-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the need for school nurses. Their duties have expanded beyond basic medical care for staff and students to testing for the virus, coordinating responses to sick individuals, monitoring quarantining periods, contact tracing, and reporting to local and state officials.

While SB58 would apply only to school districts, it is worth noting charter schools face similar issues. To ensure all students' health needs are met, the legislature may wish to consider extending the bill's provisions to include charter schools. According to the ASHSR, during the 2018-2019 school year, 30 of 36 state-authorized charter schools reported having less than one full-time school nurse. Of the 30 charter schools without a full-time nurse, eight had no nurse at all. The estimated cost of funding a full-time nurse at all 52 state-authorized charter schools is \$2,455,076.

According to the 2018-2019 Annual School Health Services Report, there were more than 1.9 million visits to school district health offices during the school year. The top three reasons for visits were acute illness, chronic conditions, and injuries. School nurses were responsible for 21,961 prescription medications for students in their school district. By providing health services, such as care for acute illness, chronic disease management, medication administration, and other services, during the school day, the school nurse supports students' ability to return to class and have a greater opportunity to learn. According the 2018-2019 Annual School Health Services Report, 91 percent of all students visiting the health office returned to class.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

N/A

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

Because funding appropriated by SB58 would go directly to the PED, department staff would be required to develop a distribution method for the funds. Demand for school nurse funding could potentially exceed the amount of the appropriation; PED staff would need to establish standards and procedures to prioritize funding to schools and school districts without nurses.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

N/A

TECHNICAL ISSUES

The bill defines a "school nurse" as a person who is licensed by the PED and the Board of Nursing as a school nurse. The Board of Nursing does not designate nurses as "school nurses."

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

While the National Association of School Nurses recommends a ratio of one school nurse to 750 students, it notes a one-size-fits-all workload determination is inadequate to meet the complex health needs of students and school communities. The [National Association of School Nurses](#) states other factors that should be considered include the following:

- safety, medical acuity, and health needs of a student;
- characteristics and considerations of student or population, including social needs and the infrastructure that increased inequities in social determinants of health;
- characteristics and considerations of the school nurse and other inter-professional team members; and
- context and culture of the school or school district that influences nursing services delivered.

ALTERNATIVES

N/A

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL

N/A

AMENDMENTS

N/A