
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Connie Leyva, Chair
2021 - 2022 Regular

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| Bill No: | AB 815 | Hearing Date: | June 30, 2021 |
| Author: | Luz Rivas | | |
| Version: | February 16, 2021 | | |
| Urgency: | No | Fiscal: | Yes |
| Consultant: | Ian Johnson | | |

Subject: School nurses: credentialing

SUMMARY

This bill authorizes the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) to approve a school nurse credentialing program offered by a local educational agency (LEA).

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Requires the CTC to establish professional standards, assessments, and examinations for entry and advancement in the education profession.
- 2) Specifies minimum requirements for a services credential with a specialization in health for a school nurse to be a baccalaureate or higher degree from an accredited institution, a valid California license as a registered nurse, and one year of coursework beyond the baccalaureate degree in a program approved by the CTC.
- 3) Specifies that a preliminary credential for a services credential for a school nurse is valid for five years, pending completion of a year of coursework beyond the baccalaureate degree and a professional credential in school nursing is valid for five years, after completion of requirements specified by the CTC.
- 4) Specifies that the holder of a services credential with a specialization in health for a school nurse who also completes the requirements for a special class authorization in health in a program that is approved by the CTC is authorized to teach classes on health in a preschool, kindergarten, grades 1 to 12, inclusive, and classes organized primarily for adults.
- 5) Provides the CTC with powers and duties including the adoption and implementation of an accreditation framework setting forth the commission's policies regarding the accreditation of educator preparation in California.
- 6) Requires the CTC to establish and modify credential-specific standards, experimental program standards, and alternative program standards.
- 7) Authorizes the CTC to issue the preliminary teaching credential, to be granted upon possession of a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited institution, completion of an accredited credential program, and either successful

passage of an examination or assessment that has been adopted or approved by the CTC.

ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Permits LEAs to apply for authorization of a clear credential program in school nursing from the CTC.
- 2) Requires the CTC to apply the standards for approval of a program of professional preparation offered by a postsecondary educational institution to a program of professional preparation offered by a LEA.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, “COVID-19 highlighted the critical role that nurses play in safeguarding the health of our communities. Unfortunately, a majority of California’s schoolchildren must attend a school with no nurse present. In fact, for the 2018-2019 school year, there was only one nurse for every 2,400 students. This school nurse shortage means that non-medical staff, like teachers and administrators, must be the ones who provide critical health services for students, particularly those experiencing chronic health conditions like diabetes and asthma.

“Under current law, candidates must earn a Clear School Nurse Services Credential to serve as a school nurse. However, only four universities in the entire state offer accredited programs that grant this credential. AB 815 increases access to this necessary credentialing program by clarifying in state law that Local Education Agencies (LEAs) can apply to the Commission on Teaching Credentialing to establish in-house Clear School Nurse Services credentialing programs.”
- 2) ***The shortage of school nurses.*** By 2030, California is anticipated to have the most severe nursing shortage alongside Florida and Texas. It is estimated that for the 2018-2019 school year, there were about 2,700 school nurses employed and about 6.2 million students enrolled in California. This equates to about 2,300 students potentially needing care from each school nurse. Some rural counties reported no school nurses at all. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends one school nurse to 750 students in a healthy population and one school nurse to 225 students when accounting for pupils who require daily professional health services.

These numbers are not new as it has been many years since every school in the state had a nurse of its own to conduct on-campus health screenings, review immunization records, tend to students’ minor medical needs and perform other duties intended to keep students healthy. The role of school nurses has become more critical due to the pandemic, with schools required to follow an extensive list of health and safety protocols.

In analyzing the potential causes of the school nurse shortage, it should be noted that the average salary for a nurse in California is \$113,250. Meanwhile, the average salary for a school nurse in Los Angeles Unified was less than \$80,000 in 2019, according to the district. In Fresno Unified, a school nurse is currently paid between \$56,000 and \$91,000 for 185 days of work, according to the district. School nurses often work fewer days than nurses working in hospitals and clinics, but they have to accept a lower annual salary and must take additional classes and pay more fees to get the job, which requires a School Nurse Services Credential.

- 3) ***Existing school nursing credential programs only offered at higher education institutions.*** Currently, there are four school nursing credential programs in California offered in the state: California State University at Fresno, California State University at Sacramento, California State University at Fullerton, and one private program offered at Azusa Pacific University located northeast of Los Angeles. The cost for these credential programs range from \$4,392 to \$19,552. The four school nursing credential programs provide classes such as Advanced Pediatric Health Assessment and Health Promotion, Adolescent Health Care, and Advanced Health Assessment: Ambulatory Pediatrics. The curriculum of these programs are specific to K-12 schools. Aspiring candidates enter the credential programs certified as registered nurses where they learn to work with children in a school environment, provide health and wellness services to a diverse student body, demonstrate professional management skills of data and recordkeeping, and study the formulation and evaluation of health policy.
- 4) ***The Commission on Teacher Credentialing serves several roles, including enforcing teacher preparation program standards.*** The CTC awards credentials and certificates on the basis of completion of programs that meet Standards for Educator Preparation and Standards for Educator Competence.

For each type of professional credential in education, the CTC has developed and adopted standards which are based upon recent research and the expert advice of many professional educators. Each standard specifies a level of quality and effectiveness that the CTC requires from programs offering academic and professional preparation in education. The CTC enforces its standards by evaluating approved programs across California through an objective process conducted by carefully selected and trained professional educators to ensure that the standards are applied consistently and rigorously.

- 5) ***Arguments in support.*** Los Angeles Unified School District states: “Los Angeles Unified views the provisions in AB 815 as creating an alternative option, but not a replacement, of the existing credentialing programs offered by postsecondary institutions of higher education. We believe there are several benefits to authorizing LEAs to offer their own credentialing programs. School nurse candidates are able to experience on-site learning, receive ongoing mentoring and on-the-job coaching, and be immersed in the school campus life to better understand the health and social and emotional needs of the student population served. Los Angeles Unified has offered distinguished educator preparation programs since 1983 that meet or exceed the quality standards and rigor set forth by the CTC, and is prepared to set the same standards when

seeking accreditation to offer a Professional Clear School Nurse Services Credential. By expanding which entities may offer the necessary school nurse credential, AB 815 could have the effect of increasing access to high-quality credentialing programs with the goal of supporting school employers with more qualified candidates that are ready for hire or who still need to complete the credentialing requirements.”

- 6) **Arguments in opposition.** The California State University Office of the Chancellor states, “the CSU has a long history of producing quality school nurses at CSU Sacramento, CSU Fresno, and CSU Fullerton. Each of these programs caters to the needs of their students and has improved access by offering online courses and limiting the number days they must be physically in the classroom. As a result, the CSU produces over 200 high quality and skilled school nurses each year. Unlike teaching credential programs, the standard of care for nursing programs is much higher. To offer a high-quality program, an LEA will need to invest in qualified and experienced faculty to teach the course work, and facilities and equipment to prepare school nurses for the profession. The CSU already has the infrastructure in place to deliver high quality nursing candidates and has proven capable of doing so as the Master Plan intended. For these reasons, the CSU respectfully requests your “no” vote on AB 815.”
- 7) **Committee amendment.** To ensure that this bill aligns with the changes made in AB 320 (Medina), which was heard in this Committee on June 16, 2021, **staff recommends amending this bill** to specify that one of the minimum requirements for a services credential with a specialization in health for a school nurse is a baccalaureate or higher degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education.

SUPPORT

Association of California School Administrators
California County Superintendents Educational Services Association
California School Boards Association
Humboldt County Office of Education
Los Angeles Unified School District
Riverside County Office of Education
Santa Clara County Office of Education

OPPOSITION

California School Nurses Organization
California State University

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