

1 **CONCURRENT RESOLUTION REGARDING MENTAL HEALTH**

2 **SUPPORT IN SCHOOLS**

3 2023 GENERAL SESSION

4 STATE OF UTAH

5 **Chief Sponsor: Steve Eliason**

6 Senate Sponsor: Ann Millner

8 **LONG TITLE**

9 **General Description:**

10 This resolution recognizes the crucial contributions of school nurses, psychologists,
11 social workers, and counselors in Utah schools.

12 **Highlighted Provisions:**

13 This resolution:

- 14 ▶ highlights the critical role of school nurses, psychologists, social workers, and
15 counselors in education;
- 16 ▶ recognizes the inadequacy of current funding streams to meet demand for
17 school-based mental health professionals;
- 18 ▶ supports the creation and adoption of school formulas for staffing school-based
19 mental health professionals at appropriate levels; and
- 20 ▶ commits to exploring legislative options for increased funding allocations for
21 school-based mental health positions.

22 **Special Clauses:**

23 None

25 *Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah, the Governor concurring therein:*

26 WHEREAS, the Legislature recognizes that school nurses, school social workers,
27 school psychologists, and school counselors are uniquely qualified to provide essential
28 supports that address the physical, social, and emotional needs of students;

29 WHEREAS, all children and youth learn best when they are healthy, supported, and

30 receive an education that meets their individual needs, schools can more effectively ensure that
31 all students are ready and able to learn if schools meet all the needs of each student, and
32 learning and development are directly linked to the physical and mental health of children and a
33 supportive learning environment is an optimal place to promote physical and mental health;

34 WHEREAS, the school-based mental health professionals create a strong support for
35 students by directly working with parents and families and connecting parents, families, and
36 students with community resources outside the school system;

37 WHEREAS, the State of Utah has a shortage of all of the professionals listed in this
38 resolution, and as of the 2021-2022 school year:

39 ▶ the ratio of school psychologists to students in Utah was 1:2,114
40 students, while the national recommendation is 1:500-700;

41 ▶ the ratio of school social workers to students in Utah was 1:2,443, while
42 the national recommendation is 1:250;

43 ▶ the ratio of school nurses to students in Utah was 1:2,445, while the
44 national recommendation is one for each school, and the Utah
45 recommendation is 1:2,000; and

46 ▶ the ratio of school counselors to students in Utah was 1:503, while the
47 national recommendation is 1:250, and the Utah recommendation is
48 1:350;

49 WHEREAS, school psychologists are specially trained to deliver mental health services
50 and academic support that lower barriers to learning and allow teachers to teach more
51 effectively; school psychologists use sound psychological principles which are critical to
52 proper instruction and learning, social and emotional development, prevention and early
53 intervention, and support for a culturally diverse student population; school psychologists
54 facilitate collaboration that helps parents and educators to identify and reduce risk factors,
55 promote protective factors, create safe schools, and access community resources; and school
56 psychologists are trained to assess barriers to learning, utilize data-based decision making,
57 implement research-driven prevention and intervention strategies, evaluate outcomes, and

58 improve accountability;

59 WHEREAS, school social workers are trained mental health professionals especially
60 skilled in providing services to students who face serious challenges to school success,
61 including disability, poverty, discrimination, abuse, neglect, mental illness, homelessness,
62 bullying, familial stressors, and other barriers to learning; school social workers, being licensed
63 mental health professionals in schools in the United States, are a vital link between the home,
64 school, and community by providing necessary assessments, interventions, counseling, family
65 outreach, and community referrals; and school social workers maintain knowledge of school
66 culture and school climate, which are necessary for responsible school safety planning;

67 WHEREAS, school nurses are registered professional school nurses that advance the
68 well-being, academic success, and life-long achievements of all students by serving the school
69 community and providing a critical safety net for our state's children; school nurses provide
70 support and direct care to students with acute injuries and chronic health conditions through
71 care management, advocacy, and coordination; school nurses are often the first to identify
72 behavioral health concerns and families in crisis; school nurses act as a liaison to the school
73 community, parents, and health care providers on behalf of children's health by promoting
74 wellness and improving health outcomes for our community's children; and school nurses, as
75 members of school-based mental health teams, understand the link between health and learning
76 and are in a position to make a positive difference for children every day;

77 WHEREAS, school counselors recognize and respond to the need for mental health
78 services that promote social/emotional wellness and development for all students; school
79 counselors advocate for the mental health needs of all students by offering instruction that
80 enhances awareness of mental health, appraisal, and advisement addressing academic, career,
81 and social/emotional development, short-term counseling interventions, and referrals to
82 community resources for long-term support; school counselors perform a wide range of duties
83 to help students excel academically, develop resiliency, adjust socially, and cope with
84 school-related and personal concerns or problems both in and out of school; school counselors
85 help develop well-rounded students by guiding students through academic learning, social and

86 emotional development, and career exploration; school counselors play a vital role in ensuring
87 that students are ready for both college and careers; and school counselors coordinate efforts to
88 foster a positive school climate, resulting in a safe learning environment for all students;

89 WHEREAS, the Legislature recognizes that school nurses, school social workers,
90 school psychologists, and school counselors are uniquely qualified to provide essential
91 supports that address the physical, social, and emotional needs of students;

92 WHEREAS, the need for comprehensive student support has grown beyond what is
93 currently funded in the prototypical school model, and the need for these professionals in
94 schools has grown beyond what is currently available for staffing and hiring availability;

95 WHEREAS, the Legislature recognizes that solving a shortage problem in these
96 multiple fields will require a multifaceted response; action and problem solving will need to
97 address training program funding, training program increased capacity, payment structures that
98 incentivize and honor professionals to work and stay working in school systems, models of
99 school-based mental health services to best utilize all professionals, ensuring professionals are
100 able to work within their appropriate domains, creative funding solutions, and taking advantage
101 of all funding opportunities to support intentional efforts to solve this issue; more than one
102 solution will be necessary, and solutions will need to be collaboratively created with all
103 stakeholders; and we cannot wait for one solution before working towards another, otherwise
104 we continue to be stuck in a loop of inaction;

105 WHEREAS, current funding streams do not support appropriate hiring of school-based
106 mental health professionals, and the opening of other funding streams, such as general
107 education funds, would more accurately represent student needs and support hiring of
108 school-based mental health professionals; and

109 WHEREAS, while certain school-based mental health professionals have codified
110 ratios in place, others do not; having a codified ratio is a step in the right direction, and each
111 school-based mental health profession should have a codified ratio; however, ratios are of little
112 practical use if local education agencies (LEAs) are not able to or choose not to use multiple
113 streams of funding to pay for professionals; ongoing funding is needed to meet the ratio rules

114 that already exist or should be created; and codified ratios help to guide LEAs in appropriate
115 staffing decisions:

116 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah, the
117 Governor concurring therein, supports the creation and adoption of school formulas for staffing
118 physical, social, and emotional support in schools to meet staffing ratio recommendations for
119 school nurses, school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists.

120 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor honor and
121 recognize the contributions of school nurses, school counselors, school social workers, and
122 school psychologists in providing social and emotional support and health services to K-12
123 students across the state of Utah.

124 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor commit to
125 exploring legislation to provide increased allocations to LEAs that demonstrate they have hired
126 staff for these roles or have a need for hiring to meet appropriate ratios in anticipation that
127 enhanced state funding will allow school districts to hire additional school nurses, school social
128 workers, school psychologists, and school counselors.

129 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor commit to
130 exploring increased funding to increase the number of school nurses, school counselors, school
131 social workers, and school psychologists providing social and emotional support and health
132 services to K-12 students across the state by adopting a formula for the distribution of a basic
133 education instructional allocation for each LEA.

134 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor support exploring
135 the codification of appropriate ratios for all professions if they are not already in statute.

136 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor commit to
137 funding for training programs to increase student capacity and explore ways that training
138 programs can access necessary supports, funding, and personnel to increase training of future
139 professionals.

140 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor commit to
141 furthering retention and attraction of professionals to the school system and finding related

142 retention and attraction solutions.

143 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor commit to
144 exploring salary and payment of professionals compared to other educators and professionals
145 working in the private sector and to generating ideas to make payment equitable and attractive.

146 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor commit to
147 exploring professionals' scope of practice and structures of school-based mental health services
148 to ensure that professionals are being used in the appropriate capacity and are able to function
149 in their specific domains that support their retention in school systems and best services
150 delivered to students.