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Bills: House Bill 331 & 617
Senate Bills 604

Titles: Public Schools – Medical Cannabis – Guidelines for Administration to Students (Connor’s Courage)
Public & Nonpublic Schools- Medical Cannabis- Policy for Administration During School Hours and Events

Date: February 19, 2020

Committee: House: Ways and Means and Health and Government Affairs
Senate: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs

I have worked as a school nurse for 26 years and as a supervisor of School Health Services for 9 of those years. I am writing to voice my concern regarding these bills. School nurses care for children, it is our passion. We want what is best for children, we want to alleviate their pain and symptoms and help them access learning. However, we are committed to safe practice and bound by the Maryland Nurse Practice Act which requires nurses to administer medications only with a written order by an authorized prescriber.

School nurse should always support families and their choices, but as much as we want to help, we cannot accept medication orders from parents without jeopardizing our licensure. In addition, I have the following concerns regarding efficacy and safety for the pediatric population:

- School nurses need an authorized prescriber to consult if any adverse effects arise and to monitor the patient’s condition while on the medication.
- Medical cannabis is still classified as a Schedule I Controlled Substance by the federal government.
- Medical cannabis is not regulated by the FDA. See attached document for more information.
- The National Association of School Nurses issued a position brief in 2019 which provides guidance to schools and states, only medications approved by the FDA should be administered in the school setting.
- I feel it is important to follow the processes established to study medications before administering them to people. Public acceptance of medical cannabis use at the state level continues to grow but it does not mean it is safe.
- There is lack of evidenced-based research regarding the long-term adverse effects that medical cannabis may have on people, especially children. We need more rigorous, long-term, studies with large sample sizes to be sure that what we are giving to children will not do more harm than good.
- We know medical cannabis is metabolized by the liver, but we do not know how pediatric livers will respond.
- We do not know how medical cannabis will affect developing brains and cognition in children.
- Without the scientific research and without a written order by an authorized prescriber, these bills are asking school nurses to practice outside their scope and against our standards of practice.
- I understand that medical cannabis can be beneficial for some children with medical needs and I support a parent’s right to use it if they chose. I do not believe it is safe or ethical for licensed nurses to administer medical cannabis until the science catches up to public policy.