Nurses for Under-Resourced Schools Everywhere (NURSE) Act

ACTION
The National Association of School Nurses (NASN) urges Congress to pass the Nurses for Under-Resourced Schools Everywhere Act (NURSE) Act, which would recognize the critical role of school nurses in providing students access to quality health care so that they are safe, healthy, and ready to learn. The NURSE Act, S 1362, was introduced by Senator Jon Tester (D-MT) in the Senate and Representative Dina Titus (D-NV) introduced the companion bill in the House of Representatives, HR 2606.

HISTORY
- National data indicates 39 percent of public schools have a school nurse all day, every day, while another 35 percent of schools have a school nurse who works part-time in one or more schools. Wide ratio disparities exist from state to state, within states and school districts, and between urban and rural schools.
- In 2011, the U.S. Census Bureau reported 9.7 percent of children under 19 (7.6 million) were uninsured. For many of our nation’s children, the school nurse is the sole provider of access to health care. This makes the role of school nurses even more critical.
- The American Nurses Association has reported that when there is no registered nurse on the school premises, the responsibility to administer the necessary medications and treatments, and to appropriately monitor children’s health issues, fall on the shoulders of administrators, educators, and staff, who are ill-prepared to perform these tasks.
- School nurses operate in what some have termed the “Hidden Health Care System.”

BACKGROUND
- NASN supports a demonstration grant program to fund school nurses based on Title I designation (free and reduced lunch and breakfast).
- Poverty is frequently an indicator of unmet health needs. All students should be able to have their health needs safely met while in the school setting.
- The current reality is that students have greater healthcare needs than in past generations. Children cannot meet their full potential with unmet health needs.
- School nurses promote wellness and disease prevention and perform early intervention services, such as periodic assessments for vision, hearing, and dental problems, to reduce barriers to learning and address health disparities.
- Today’s students face more medically complex conditions and chronic health illnesses – including asthma, diabetes, food allergies, obesity, and mental health and behavioral issues – which require the knowledge, assessment skills, and judgment of a school nurse to provide management of these lifelong conditions.
- School nurses coordinate with families, schools, and providers to connect children to medical homes, which can help improve health outcomes and reduce costs.
Reversing the Youth Tobacco Epidemic Act

ACTION

NASN urges Congress to pass the Reversing Youth Tobacco Epidemic Act of 2019, HR 2339, that would protect children and teens from a surge of tobacco use and tobacco-related health issues. This legislation calls on the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to address the leading drivers of youth tobacco use. Congress can reverse the youth e-cigarette epidemic and continue to reduce youth tobacco use by passing this important legislation. HR 2339 was introduced by Representatives Frank Pallone (D-NJ) and Representative Donna Shalala (D-FL)

HISTORY

- Both FDA and the Surgeon General have classified youth use of e-cigarettes as an epidemic.
- Between 2017 and 2019, e-cigarette use increased by 135 percent among high school students: from 11.7 percent to 27.5 percent respectively.
- Tobacco flavors in e-cigarettes, cigarettes and cigars have saturated the marketplace, and their use among teenagers has skyrocketed. Among high school students who use e-cigarettes, 65.9 percent use fruit-flavored e-cigarettes and 63.6 percent use mint or menthol e-cigarettes. Use of mint and menthol e-cigarettes among high school students has increased by more than 50 percent in the last two years.

BACKGROUND

- The legislation would prohibit the sale of tobacco products to anyone under 21. About 95 percent of adult smokers begin smoking before they turn 21 years old. If a person does not does not begin using tobacco product in their 20's, they are unlikely to ever do so. Raising the tobacco sale age to 21 will help keep tobacco from youth.
- The legislation would curtail use of flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes. Flavors mask the taste of tobacco and make it easier for youth to start using a product and ultimately to become addicted. Prohibiting tobacco products in youth-friendly flavors is one of the most important actions Congress can take to reverse the youth e-cigarette epidemic and continue to reduce youth tobacco use.
- The legislation would prohibit online sales of tobacco products. Online sales provide youth with easy access to tobacco products and create challenges for enforcement of federal, state, and local laws related to the manufacture, marketing, and sale of tobacco products. Internet sites that sell tobacco products often fail to use effective age verification strategies and offer products that violate FDA requirements.
Status of E-Cigarette/Vaping Legislation and Regulation

In September, the Administration first announced a ban on all flavored e-cigarettes, but still allowing for tobacco-flavored e-cigarettes to remain. However, since that announcement the Administration has seemingly retreated from that position.

Before Congress left before Christmas, they pulled together an end of year package that included the remaining appropriations bills and several other bipartisan bills including a provision that raised the age to purchase tobacco to 21 years under the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2020. The legislation was passed on December 17, 2019. While this is an important step to stop youth access to tobacco, it does nothing to address vaping and the flavors that have attracted children and teenagers.

In January 2020, the Administration announced final guidance which does ban most flavored pods. However, it bans mint e-cigarettes but allows for menthol flavors (which critics expect that youth who use mint will migrate to menthol). The new guidance will exempt refillable pod system as well as disposable systems. The new guidance will allow flavors in e-liquid. This is a large loophole that will allow children to still be able access flavored e-cigarettes. Additionally, vape shops are still allowed to exist.

The Reversing the Youth Tobacco Epidemic Act, HR 2339, introduced by Representative Frank Pallone (D-NJ) and Donna Shalala (D-FL), which is a NASN legislative priority, passed out of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. HR 2339 bans all flavored tobaccos, including menthol. This legislation would also prevent online sale of tobacco products. This bill is expected to go to the floor of the House in February.

There is not yet a Senate companion, however there is interest from a few Senate members.
January 2020

Anti-Lunch Shaming Act

ACTION

The National Association of School Nurses (NASN) urges Congress to pass the Anti-Lunch Shaming Act of 2019, S. 1119, that would require schools to stop singling out children who either do not have money in their school lunch account or the ability to pay for their meal on the spot. This will end the practice of “lunch shaming” that embarrasses children who cannot pay for their meals. This legislation was introduced by Senator Tom Udall (D-NM).

HISTORY

- More than three-quarters of school districts report some sort of school meal debt according to the School Nutrition Association. However school and school district policies vary greatly on how they address this issue of children with school meal “debt.”

- Some school districts will allow students to carry a small balance but that balance is frequently limited. Some districts will offer an alternative meal, such as a cheese sandwich, if there is a debt. Some districts allow younger students to charge meals but not older students.

- **Lunch shaming** happens when a lunch is taken away from a child because there is not enough money in their account (or in hand) to purchase a school lunch. Some school districts have gone so far as to stamp children’s hands or placed stickers or wristbands saying “I need lunch money,” that humiliates and embarrasses students.

- **No child** should be embarrassed by their parent’s financial status.

- **No child should be hungry at school.**

BACKGROUND

- **Prohibits schools from taking any action that stigmatizes or shames students** who cannot pay their school meal fees.

- **Schools cannot dispose of food after it has been served to a child.**

- **Requires all communication** related to unpaid school meal fees be directed to the child’s parent or guardian.

- **Includes language** that encourages schools to adopt best practices that ensure eligible students have access to free and reduced-price school meals and increase efforts to reduce unpaid school meal fees.