



STATE OF DELAWARE  
**STATE COUNCIL FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**  
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The Honorable John Carney  
Governor

John McNeal  
SCPD Director

**MEMORANDUM**

DATE: May 5, 2021

TO: All Members of the Delaware State Senate  
and House of Representatives

FROM: Terri Hancharick – Chairperson *TH*  
State Council for Persons with Disabilities

RE: HB 129 (School-Based Health Centers)

The State Council for Persons with Disabilities (SCPD) has reviewed H.B. 129, which seeks to expand the requirements for state funding of school-based health centers to include high needs elementary schools. SCPD has the following observations.

As background, school-based health centers are medical clinics, usually operated by private healthcare providers, located in or near a school facility. School-based health centers have generally been found to improve access to primary care as well as overall health for students from disadvantaged communities. They can also serve as a critical access point for behavioral health treatment and other specialized care (a more thorough discussion of the research supporting school-based health centers and the history of school-based health centers in Delaware can be found in “A Landscape of School-Based Health Centers in Delaware” by Margaret Culpepper Chesser, available at <https://udspace.udel.edu/bitstream/handle/19716/24912/School-Based-Health-Centers-Brief-2019.pdf>).

In 2016 Delaware enacted legislation, codified at 14 Del. C. § 4126, requiring all

secondary schools in the state to have school-based health centers. HB 129 would expand this requirement to “high needs elementary schools,” including charter schools. High needs elementary schools would be defined to include any elementary school in the top quartile in at least three of four categories (percentage of low-income students, percentage of English learners, percentage of students with disabilities, or percentage of minority students), or that has “90% of its students classified as low-income, English learners, or minority.”

The bill would obligate the state to pay “the start-up costs” for a school-based health center in any remaining high schools lacking school-based health centers and at least two high needs elementary schools per fiscal year until all covered schools have school-based health centers. While the bill does not specifically address ongoing funding, according to the fiscal impact statement accompanying the bill the State is currently contributing \$5,000 per school for “start-up costs” for school-based health centers in high schools, as well as annual funding of “\$170,000 per [center] (based on a 1,000-student high school) with an additional allowance of \$100 per student over the 1,000-student threshold.”

Under the proposed language of the bill, elementary schools with existing school-based health centers that are in full compliance with requirements for school-based health centers under state insurance laws and regulations would have the option to apply to the Department of Education for reimbursement, subject to further rules to be put forth by the Department. According to the Division of Public Health (DPH) website, seven public elementary schools currently operate school-based health centers without state funding; all seven schools are in Colonial and Red Clay Consolidated School Districts (a full list of Delaware public schools with school-based health centers recognized by DPH is available at <https://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/chca/dphsbhcceninfo01.html>). Additionally, numerous charter schools operate school-based health centers that are not currently state-funded (see <https://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/chca/files/sbhenoncontractlocations.pdf>).

While school-based health center operations have been unavoidably impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly during periods when school buildings have been closed to students, it is important to note that children’s access to primary and preventative care in other settings has also been disrupted over the past year. It is crucial that as schools re-open, students have access to needed care for both physical and mental health, particularly as experts are warning of the potential long-term impact the pandemic may be having on child mental health (see, e.g. Elaine K. Howley, “Children’s Mental Health Crisis Could Be a Next ‘Wave’ in

the Pandemic,” U.S. News & World Report (March 4, 2021), <https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2021-03-04/childrens-mental-health-crisis-could-be-a-next-wave-in-the-pandemic>. Accessing needed health care is essential not only to children’s wellbeing but also to their success in the classroom.

For these reasons, SCPD is endorsing expanding state funding of school-based health centers.

Thank you for your consideration and please contact SCPD if you have any questions or comments regarding our position and observations on the proposed legislation.

cc: Ms. Laura Waterland, Esq.  
Governor’s Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens  
Developmental Disabilities Council

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