

Date of Hearing: March 24, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
Patrick O'Donnell, Chair  
AB 815 (Luz Rivas) – As Introduced February 16, 2021

**SUBJECT:** School nurses: credentialing

**SUMMARY:** Authorizes the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) to approve a clear credential program offered by a local educational agency (LEA) for school nursing; and, 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. Specifically, **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.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Requires the CTC to establish professional standards, assessments, and examinations for entry and advancement in the education profession. (Education Code (EC) 44225)
- 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. (EC 44267.5)
- 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. (EC 44267.5)
- 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. (EC 44267.5)
- 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. (EC 44372)
- 6) Requires the CTC to establish and modify credential-specific standards, experimental program standards, and alternative program standards. (EC 44372)

- 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. (EC 44225)

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown

**COMMENTS:**

***Need for the bill.*** This bill permits LEAs to apply for authorization of a clear credential program in school nursing from the CTC. Prior to the approval of such a program the prospective LEA would be required to go through a multi-stage accreditation process administered by the CTC in order to operate a clear credential program in school nursing.

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.”

***The need for nurses and school nurses.*** By 2030, California is anticipated to have the most severe nursing shortage alongside Florida and Texas. California is also expected to have significant population growth projected at 116% by 2030 (Zhang, 2018). Additional factors exacerbating the shortage include the shifting demographics of an increasing aging population of baby boomers who started reaching the retirement age of 65 years in 2011 and a significant portion of the nursing workforce that is nearing retirement age.

Based on figures provided by the California Department of California (CDE), the 2018-2019 school year reported there were 2,720 nurses employed in California schools and a total of 6,186,278 students in the State. This amounts to 2,274 students for every school nurse. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends one school nurse to 750 students in a healthy population and decreases to a 1:225 school nurse to student ratio when accounting for pupils who require daily professional health services. For a student population as large and diverse as California’s, it is essential to staff the appropriate amount of nurses for every school.

***The role of school nurses.*** According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, a school nurse provides vital services to pupils that aid in the educational success of students including preventive and screening services, direct care for pupils who sustain injuries and pupils with acute illnesses, and they serve as liaisons between school personnel, family, and health care professionals. For students who have special health needs, such as children with chronic illnesses

or disabilities with varying degrees of severity, the school nurse has a unique role in developing a health care plan for management of problems in a school setting.

***Process to become an approved credential program.*** Credentialing process and requirements are governed by the CTC. The CTC serves as a state standards board for educator preparation for California public schools, the enforcement of professional practices of educators, the licensing and credentialing of professional educators in the State, and the discipline of credential holders within California. According to the CTC, “The mission of the CTC is to ensure integrity, relevance, and high quality in the preparation, certification, and discipline of the educators who serve all of California’s diverse students.”

The CTC awards credentials to individuals who complete programs that meet Standards for Educator Preparation and Standards for Educator Competence. For each credential program in education, the CTC has carefully developed and adopted standards based upon current research and the recommendations of experts in each field of specialty. The CTC enforces the official standards by evaluating the approved programs to ensure the quality and effectiveness of the program are maintained.

According to the CTC, the credential programs are offered at various institutions ranging from colleges, universities, school districts, county offices of education, to private/independent institutions. The CTC currently reports 245 approved institutions that offer various types of educator preparation programs. When a new program is proposed, an institution must go through an Initial Institutional Approval (IIA) Process in order to become an approved program sponsor. The IIA process is a rigorous and lengthy assessment that ensures potential program sponsors have the capacity, resources, and the expertise to offer an educator preparation program. The IIA process consists of five stages:

- 1) Stage I: Prerequisites - the institution verifies that it is regionally accredited, a local educational agency, or is preparing to offer STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) programs.
- 2) Stage II: Eligibility requirements - the institution must respond to 12 detailed criteria regarding eligibility.
- 3) Stage III: Documentation of alignment with all common standards, program standards, and relevant preconditions.
- 4) Stage IV: Provisional and program approval for 2-3 years or denial.
- 5) Stage V: Granting of full institutional approval - the institution is assigned to a specific cohort for a recurring 7-year accreditation cycle.

***School nursing credential requirements.*** California has a two-tiered credential system. An applicant must meet basic requirements within a five-year period in order to satisfy an initial, preliminary credential, which is not renewable. A clear credential is then issued when all requirements are met and can be renewed every five years.

The requirements for a Preliminary school nursing credential are as follows:

- 1) Official transcripts showing a baccalaureate or higher degree from a regionally-accredited college or university;
- 2) Photocopy of a valid Registered Nurse License issued by the State of California;
- 3) Completed application including a completed Live Scan receipt; and
- 4) Application processing fee.

The requirements for the Clear school nursing credential include:

- 1) Verification of possession of a Preliminary school nurse services credential;
- 2) Verification of possession of a valid Registered Nurse License issued by the State of California
- 3) Completion of two successful years of experience as a school nurse; and
- 4) Completion of a CTC-approved school nurse program and to obtain the formal recommendation of the college or university where the program was completed.

In order to hold a services credential in school nursing, one must be able to perform the following services:

- 1) Conduct immunization programs
- 2) Assess and evaluate the health and developmental status of pupils
- 3) Interpret the health and developmental assessment to parents, teachers, and administrators
- 5) Design and implement individual student health maintenance plans
- 5) Refer the pupil and parent or guardian to appropriate resources for needed services
- 6) Maintain communication with parents and practitioners to promote needed treatment
- 7) Make recommendations regarding student's individualized education program
- 8) Conduct in-service training for and serve as a resource to teachers and administrators
- 9) Develop and implement the health education curriculum
- 10) Assist in implementing a comprehensive health instruction curriculum for students
- 11) Counsel and assist pupils and parents in health-related and school adjustment services

12) Teach health-related subjects under the supervision of a classroom teacher

***Current school nursing credential programs.*** There are only four school nursing credential programs in California offered at IHEs: 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.

***Related legislation.*** AB 2175 (Gibson) of the 2019-20 Session was substantially similar to this bill and would have authorized the CTC to approve a clear credential program offered by a LEA for school nursing; and required 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.

***Arguments in support.*** Los Angeles Unified School District states: “Los Angeles Unified views the provisions in AB 815 is 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.”

***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.”

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

**Support**

Los Angeles Unified School District  
Santa Clara County Office of Education  
The LA Trust for Children's Health

**Opposition**

California School Nurses Organization  
California State University, Office of The Chancellor

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