

Commission on Local Government

Estimate of Local Fiscal Impact

2020 General Assembly Session

Bill: SB151

Patron: Stuart

Date: 1/21/2020

In accordance with the provisions of §30-19.03 of the Code of Virginia, the staff of the Commission on Local Government offers the following analysis of the above-referenced legislation:

Bill Summary:

School personnel; staffing ratios; school nurses. Excludes school nurse positions from requirements for student support positions and instead requires each local school board to employ at least one full-time equivalent school nurse position in each elementary school, middle school, and high school in the local school division or at least one full-time equivalent school nurse position per 550 students in grades kindergarten through 12.

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**Executive Summary:**

Localities have evaluated a negative fiscal impact ranging from \$0.00 - \$22,600,000.00. Most of the localities responded with no fiscal impact because they already meet the standards proposed by the bill or their allocation is based on the funding formula tied to local revenues. Only two localities responded with a cost, and one of them noted that the bill would reduce their state funding because the Standard of Quality (SOQ) model doesn't calculate funding for a specific number of schools nurse positions; rather, it uses the statewide prevailing average of nurse hours per pupil and salaries, which would reduce the positions in the funding calculation. The other locality responded with significant cost related to compensation and benefits, but the locality has the largest school system with greatest number of students enrolled in the state. This locality noted that the cost of the bill would vary depending on whether the calculation is based on one nursing staff member per school or one nursing staff member per 550 student, with latter ratio being significantly higher. Please note that the estimated cost provided this locality is justifiable because that locality's school health system functions through locality's health system, and the staffing is provided by the locality's health department. Their school's health is a blended model that utilizes a combination of a Public Health Nurse (PHN), who is licensed as Registered Nurse and trained paraprofessional School Health Aids (SHA). The SHA is assigned to school health room and the PHN is assigned to two to five schools. Their current PHN to Student Ratio is 1:2,743, and they are trying to decrease that ratio to 1:2,000, which would add an additional cost of about \$5.0 million.

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**Local Analysis:**

**Locality:** City of Harrisonburg

**Estimated Fiscal Impact:** \$0.00

There would be no fiscal impact as our school system already has a full-time nurse in each of its schools.

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Locality: City of Norfolk

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$125,000.00

The estimated impact to Norfolk Public Schools is a decrease in state funding of approximately \$125,000 in both FY 2021 and FY 2022.

The state's Standards of Quality (SOQ) model doesn't calculate funding for a specific number of school nurse positions; rather, it uses the statewide prevailing average of nurse hours per pupil and salaries. As a result, it is unknown how many positions would be reduced in the funding calculation if this bill were to be enacted, but based on the above figure it would be the equivalent of about three positions. NPS reported having 50 licensed school nurses in their FY 2019 Annual School Report - Financial Section (ASRFIN). It is worth noting that this would be a funding change only, not a mandate for reduction in actual employed nurses.

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**Locality:** City of Roanoke

**Estimated Fiscal Impact:** \$0.00

Though the City of Roanoke provides funding to our Roanoke City Public School system, that allocation is based on a funding formula tied to our local revenues. The School system is responsible for it own budget process. City Council and the City Manager's Office do not have jurisdiction on how their budget is established or how the School system spends its funds. As such, though this bill will impact the Schools, it has no fiscal impact on the City itself.

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Locality: City of Virginia Beach

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

The current City of Virginia Beach Public Schools Staffing Standards allocates nurses at a rate of 1 per school. This meets the standard proposed by SB 151. As a result, there would be no additional cost to the City or School System should this bill be adopted.

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**Locality:** Fairfax County

**Estimated Fiscal Impact:**  
\$22,600,000.00

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) is the largest school district in Virginia. In FY 20 there are 189,243 students enrolled in 200 school sites in Fairfax County Public Schools. The Fairfax County School Health Program functions through a strong partnership with FCPS and the Health Department. Staffing is provided by the Health Department with extensive collaboration and support from school staff. The County school health model is a Blended Model that utilizes a combination of Public Health Nurses (PHN) who are licensed as Registered Nurses and trained paraprofessional School Health Aides (SHA). A School Health Aide is assigned to the health room at each school. A Public Health Nurse is assigned between two and five schools, depending on the acuity of each school. The system also relies on extensive and ongoing training for the SHAs as well as school staff.

Under the Fairfax County school health model, the SHA follows established protocols to provide care for sick and injured students, administer medications, conduct hearing and vision screenings, and alert parents or guardians of the need for further care when indicated. Primary PHN responsibilities include the identification of health conditions that may require support; developing a plan of care to assure the students' health needs are supported during the academic day; evaluating and coordinating responses to communicable disease; providing staff training on the support of students' health conditions; and promoting the overall health and wellness of the school community.

Our current ratio is one full-time equivalent school nurse (PHN) per 2,743 students. In order to address the growing challenges facing the County's School Health system, the Health Department is working to decrease the PHN to student ratio. Currently, program costs for salary and benefits are \$22.7 million. If the PHN to student ratio was decreased to 1:2,000 (Fairfax County established goal), it would require fully funding 38 additional full-time equivalent PHN positions with an associated cost of \$5.0 million. When fully funded and implemented, the full program salary and benefit cost will be approximately \$27.8 million. The Health Department set a recommended target ratio of 1:2,000 to allow PHNs to efficiently meet the health needs of students, provide regular training to SHA and FCPS staff, and effectively address school related population health priorities.

The proposed staffing ratio in SB 151 consists of one full-time equivalent school nurse position in each elementary, school, middle school, and high school in the local school division or one full-time equivalent school nurse per 550 students in grades kindergarten through 12.

To achieve the goal of one full-time equivalent nurse in every school, under the current staffing model, the County would incur a projected additional net cost of \$16.3 million in compensation and benefits.

To achieve the goal of one full-time equivalent nurse per 550 students, under the current staffing model, the County would incur a projected additional net cost of \$22.6 million in compensation and benefits.

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Locality: Henrico County. **Estimated Fiscal Impact:** \$0.00

HCPS meets this staffing standard with a school nurse position in every school.

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**Locality:** King William County **Estimated Fiscal Impact:** \$0.00

KWC already complies.

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Locality: Town of Ashland

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

no impact to town

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**Locality:** Town of Buchanan

**Estimated Fiscal Impact:** \$0.00

This has no fiscal impact to our town as the school system falls under the County level.

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Professional and Other Organization

Analysis:

Organization: Northern Neck PDC

No negative fiscal impact; increases efficiency.

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