



For Immediate Release – October 5, 2020

Nurses' Union Recommendations for Safe School Reopen Ignored while the District Reopens Schools

On August 21st, the school nursing leadership taskforce in the District of Columbia Nurses Association (DCNA) sent a letter to Dr. LaQuandra Nesbitt, Director of DC Health, on recommendations that must be implemented to ensure the schools are safe before students return to the school. The recommendations included adequate protective gear, implementing proper ventilation of the health suites, streamline the process for caring for students, identifying isolation rooms, proper staffing, cleaning of the health suite, quarantine protocols and more. On August 22nd, Dr. Nesbitt responded dismissively and did not engage with DCNA in any way.

On October 5th, the District announced in-person learning for Pre-K through 5th grade. However, many of the recommendations of DCNA have not been implemented. As of last week, our members have reported that many nurses have not received adequate protective gear, the health suites are not properly ventilated, no protocols for isolation rooms, temperature checks and other safety measures have been implemented to date and the health suites have not been cleaned.

The failure of the District to implement safety measures and work with DCNA to implement a safe school opening is placing the lives of the staff and children at risk. Almost a third of our members in the school system have underlying health conditions and are concerned for their health and the health of the students they care for. Robin Burns, RN, Vice President of DCNA and school nurse, stated, “[n]urses will be put at risk covering more than one school during the pandemic crisis due to the shortage of school nurses. This will place the health of the students, teachers, families, and the larger community at risk.” As noted by Thedith Moore, Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN), School Nurse, President of the LPN unit of School Nurses at DCNA, “nurses like all others want the schools open but the safety concerns have not been prioritized to date. We can do this but we all need to be at the table working together.”

DCNA is a full-service professional organization and labor union solely dedicated to representing health care professionals in the District of Columbia. With over 2,000 members, DCNA advances the health care profession by fostering high standards of practice, promoting the economic and general welfare of employees in the workplace and lobbying District officials regarding health care issues. DCNA represents over 100 school nurses.

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