

**School Nurses**  
Testimony to the Joint Education Committees  
Arkansas State Legislature  
By Jane Browning, September 8, 2014

My name is Jane Browning and I live in Hot Springs Village. During his second administration, President Clinton appointed me Executive Director of the President's Committee on Mental Retardation (now People with Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities). From 2001-2005, I was the Executive Director of the Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA).

It was during my tenure at LDA that I became familiar with the critical role played by school nurses in the continuum of services to children with special needs. I learned that children who are failing in their classwork due to dyslexia and other learning disabilities often become ill, either as a pretense or in fact due to stress, and seek the sanctuary of the school nurse's office. The nurse acts in effect as "the canary in the coal mine," a first stop in what is often the process of identifying, diagnosing, and finally effectively treating a learning disability.

The same is true of children who are being bullied by their classmates and seek escape from their torturers. Very often, it is the same group of children who have special needs who are subjected to bullying at school. Again, the school nurse plays an important role as "first responder" to children who are suffering.

School nurses also play an important role in identifying many issues affecting a child's ability to learn, such as hearing loss, poor eyesight, asthma, diabetes and a host of other problems that emerge during the school years.

It is my determined opinion that every school building should have a school nurse at work at all times to address the health and welfare of our precious students.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and consideration of approving funding for school nurses.

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