

House Bill 195 (HB0195) School Nurse Salary Tiers and Minimums

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On April 10, 2025, House Bill 195 (HB0195) – School Nurse Salary Tiers and Minimums – was officially signed into New Mexico state statute by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham. This legislative milestone marked a historic moment for the New Mexico School Nurses Association (NMSNA), which had long advocated for equitable compensation and recognition for school nurses statewide.

For decades, NMSNA pursued legislation mandating a school nurse in every school. Despite the apparent benefits to student health and wellness, and even during and after the critical role school nurses played during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, these efforts fell short. In 2024, NMSNA shifted its legislative focus toward achievable, foundational goals that would lay the groundwork for the broader objective of placing a nurse in every school. Central to this strategy was establishing a consistent, statewide pay structure for school nurses.

NMSNA conducted a comprehensive statewide survey in 2024 to assess school nurse compensation, licensure structures, and recognition for national certification (National Certified School Nurse or NCSN). The data revealed that while many larger school districts offered a three-tiered pay scale comparable to that of teachers — and in some cases included stipends for NCSN certification — disparities statewide remained. Some rural districts offered significantly lower salaries or hourly wages and lacked structured pay tiers.

The NMSNA Legislative Committee researched existing pay structures for educators and school counselors, referencing statutes from previous legislation such as SB0001 (2022) and HB0181 (2023). These

established a three-tiered pay scale and annual stipends for nationally certified educators. Noting that school counselors were already included in this pay structure, the committee argued that school nurses should receive the same professional recognition and compensation.

New Mexico school nurses operate under a three-tiered licensure system regulated by the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) and must also hold a valid RN license from the New Mexico Board of Nursing. According to NMPED, the school nurse licensure framework was designed to guide districts in establishing pay structures, but no statewide salary schedule existed.

With input from Government Relations consultant Linda Siegle and support from Representative Joy Garratt, NMSNA helped draft HB0195. The bill proposed aligning school nurse compensation with the educator pay scale, incorporating three licensure tiers based on experience, education, competence, and certification, and awarding annual stipends for nationally certified school nurses.

The three licensure tiers are defined as follows:

- **Level One:** For RNs with 0–2 years of experience; and requires mentorship by a Level three school nurse.
- **Level Two:** A nine-year license for RNs with at least three years of experience who meet essential competency standards. Level two RNs may qualify for National Board annual stipend if achieved prior to ability to advance to level three license.
- **Level Three:** A nine-year license for nurses who have held a Level two license for at least three years, hold a

post-baccalaureate degree or NCSN certification, and demonstrate leadership competencies as verified by their superintendent through a highly objective uniform statewide standard of evaluation. NCSN RNs qualify for the National Board annual stipend.

Once HB0195 was introduced, NMSNA launched a statewide email campaign mobilizing school nurses to contact their representatives. The Legislative Chair Joshua Landry served as the expert witness during committee hearings. The bill's journey began in the House Education Committee (HEC) on January 29, 2025, where it was temporarily held for appropriations to be added. It was reintroduced and unanimously passed by the HEC on February 21, 2025.

Next, HB0195 moved to the House Appropriations and Finance Committee (HAFC) on March 13, 2025. An amendment removed the appropriations language, as funding was already included in HB002 – General Appropriations Act of 2025. The committee approved the amended bill 15-1. Government Relations liaison Gloria Doherty, Joshua Landry, and a local constituent addressed the concerns of the opposing representative, who ultimately voted in favor of the bill when it passed the full House unanimously, 65-0.

In the Senate, NMSNA again organized a campaign urging support from state senators. Senator Natalie Figueroa sponsored HB0195 in the Senate, where it was heard in the Senate Education Committee (SEC) on March 17, 2025. With Landry once again testifying as the expert witness, the bill passed unanimously, 6-0. HB0195 then proceeded to the Senate

floor, where it passed with overwhelming support, 35-0, just before the legislative session concluded.

With the legislative process complete, the final step was securing the Governor's signature. NMSNA Legislative Chair sent a formal letter of support both by email and registered USPS mail, followed by a statewide campaign encouraging school nurses to call the Governor's Office asking for the governor to support the bill. On April 10, 2025, Governor Lujan

Grisham signed HB0195 into law.

This success was made possible by the tireless efforts of many, including Representative Joy Garratt and Senator Natalie Figueroa; Government Relations consultants Linda Siegle and Gloria Doherty; and dedicated NMSNA members such as Joshua Landry (Legislative Chair), Elizabeth Dickson, Myrna Barbee-Lee, Barbara Wheeler, and NMSNA President Shawna Bailey. Countless others contributed along the way.

HB0195- School Nurse Salary Tiers and Minimums formally establishes pay parity for school nurses in New Mexico, aligning their compensation with teachers and granting annual stipends for national certification. This legislation not only corrects long-standing disparities in school nurse compensation but also strengthens the pipeline for recruiting and retaining qualified professionals dedicated to student health and wellness. ■

Creating Practice Parameters for the New Mexico Nursing Community

Deborah Walker, MSN, RN and Gloria Doherty, PhD, RN

April 8, 2025, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham signed HB178, Amendments to the New Mexico Nursing Practice Act. NMNA greatly appreciates the Governor's action for what we believe will serve the nursing community in the State to practice to the full extent of their education and training, to move forward and to provide safe, quality care for patients in our State.

What led to this? Due to efforts of the New Mexico Nurses Association (NMNA), our New Mexico Nursing Practice Act does not go through sunset review as experienced in many states. Additionally, it is rare that professional nursing associations in the State seek legislators who will open the Act for changes. Indeed, the forward thinking of the associations has provided a statute that serves nurses and the public over time. Nevertheless, the nursing community identifies changes that are necessitated as practice parameters and the profession evolve.

The New Mexico Nurses Association convenes representatives and leadership from the professional nursing associations annually, during the interim. These

meetings are designed for the associations to discuss their legislative priorities and needs well in advance of the beginning of a legislative session. These meetings allow for the associations to support respective initiatives and ensure that the community of nursing is "swimming in the same direction." Issues are resolved prior to the introduction of legislation so the nursing community is cohesive. Strategies are determined.

The language for the bill was negotiated during the interim with the professional nursing associations in New Mexico including NMNA, the New Mexico Nurse Practitioner Council (NMPC), members of the NM Chapter of the American College of Nurse Midwives, the NM Native American Indian Nurses Association, and the NM Association of Nurse Anesthetists. The NM Board of Nursing was consulted regularly throughout this process.

The legislation was sponsored by Representative Doreen Gallegos* with Senator Elizabeth "Liz" Stefanics carrying the bill when it passed over into the Senate. NMNA recognizes the skill of these

two legislators and thanks them for their sponsorship, efforts, and commitment to the nursing profession. Additionally, the lobbyists for NMNA (and the NM Nurse Practitioner Council) were stellar. The skill of Linda Siegle with the assistance of Gloria Doherty cannot be understated during the hard-fought process to get this bill passed.

To put the success of passage into a context:

- 1190 bills were introduced
- 202 passed both the House and the Senate
- 195 bills were sent to the Governor
- 135 were signed into law

Finally, multiple RNs and APRNs worked in coordination with our associations to advocate for the bill; their advocacy was a third tier that proved invaluable.

Of note, the law serves to:

- clarify that RNs have a role in sedation when practicing under the order of an MD or other prescriber;
- allow the Board of Nursing to waive the initial licensure fee for new gradu-