



The Honourable Kathleen Wynne  
Premier of Ontario  
Room 281  
111 Wellesley St. West  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

December 17, 2013

### **Open Letter: Improving Student Safety by Strengthening Bill 135, Ryan's Law**

Dear Premier Wynne and Esteemed MPPs,

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) appreciates Jeff Yurek's leadership in bringing forward his private member's bill, Ryan's Law (Ensuring Asthma Friendly Schools), 2013 in the wake of the tragic death of his 12-year-old constituent, Ryan Gibbons. The purpose of this letter is to urge all three political parties to channel the compassion and support that they provided to Ryan's mother, Sandra Gibbons, during second reading debate on December 5, 2013 into swift implementation of legislation that will improve student safety.

Ryan's Law is modeled after Sabrina's Law, named for 13-year-old, Sabrina Shannon, who died in 2003 as a result of an anaphylactic reaction arising from a food allergy triggered at school. Just as Sabrina's Law was passed unanimously in 2005, there is no reason why Ontario's legislators cannot work together to improve school safety for all students, including those whose lives are at risk due to severe health challenges. MPPs from all three parties who spoke to Ryan's Law, including the Minister of Education, noted that Bill 135 would be even stronger if revised to include other life-threatening conditions such as diabetes and epilepsy. The hope is that a more comprehensive approach might prevent having to introduce another law that bears the name of another child's tragic death.

In addition to making Ryan's Law more comprehensive by extending it to any life-threatening health condition, the RNAO recommends that the language of the Bill be revised to reflect current realities of inter-professional practice. As it stands, Bill 35 contains physician-centred language that does not reflect the primary care being provided each day by nurse practitioners and RNs in community health centres, NP-led clinics, family health teams, and nursing stations. Aspects of the Bill such as individual plans being "developed under the direction of the pupil's physician" does not reflect the inter-professional collaboration of regulated health professionals in primary and specialized settings who are responsible for helping clients manage increasingly complex acute and chronic health conditions. Thus, we recommend replacing this language by current language used in primary care which refers to "primary care provider."

The strength of RNAO is nurtured by the knowledge, expertise, and unwavering commitment of our members for better health outcomes for all Ontarians, especially children. Our members include experts in school health, public health, community health, paediatrics, primary care, and a range of specialized nursing areas. Two relevant resources available online are RNAO's Best Practice Guideline on *Promoting Asthma Control in Children* and the Community Health Nurses' Initiatives Group recent paper, *Healthy Schools, Healthy Children: Maximizing the Contributions of Public Health Nursing in School Settings*.

We hope you will consider these recommendations. Please do not hesitate to contact us to share our expertise to keep students safe.



Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario  
L'Association des infirmières et infirmiers  
autorisés de l'Ontario

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doris Grinspun". The signature is fluid and includes a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Doris Grinspun, RN, MSN, PhD, LL.D(hon), O.O.N.T.  
Chief Executive Officer, RNAO

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rhonda Seidman-Carlson". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Rhonda Seidman-Carlson, RN, MN  
President, RNAO

Cc: Tim Hudak, Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario  
Andrea Horwath, Leader of the New Democratic Party of Ontario  
Hon. Liz Sandals, Minister of Education  
Rob Leone, PC Critic, Education  
Peter Tabuns, NDP Critic, Education  
Hon. Deb Matthews, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care  
Christine Elliott, PC Critic, Health and Long-Term Care  
France Gélinas, NDP Critic, Health and Long-Term Care  
Jeff Yurek, MPP, Elgin-Middlesex-London  
Members of the Standing Committee on Social Policy