



Physicians Caring for Texans

Senate Committee on Education
Written Testimony of the Texas Medical Association
Senate Bill 294 by Sen. Nathan Johnson
March 8, 2023

Honorable Chair Creighton, Vice-Chair Campbell, and Committee Members:

The Texas Medical Association, representing more than 57,000 physicians and medical students across the state, appreciates the opportunity to testify **ON** Senate Bill 294, regarding ensuring the health and safety of our Texas schoolchildren.

TMA applauds the Texas Legislature for previously passing bills that allow schools to maintain and administer epinephrine and albuterol to help provide emergency care to students at school, which can potentially save lives. We appreciate lawmakers having expanded on-campus access to asthma medicine to include various medications for respiratory distress, including albuterol, levalbuterol, and other medications designated by the Health and Human Services Commission for the treatment of respiratory distress. Additionally, we applaud lawmakers for having established a well-trained advisory committee for school campuses that allows for the safe administration of medication to a person experiencing an anaphylactic reaction or respiratory distress.

Albuterol provides fast relief to a person experiencing an asthma attack. While albuterol can cause a few side effects, they are less likely to occur when the medication is administered via an inhaler.^{1,2} Albuterol inhalers are safe and effective means to address respiratory distress,³ and many states, including Texas, have passed legislation that allows schools to keep a supply of albuterol and other emergency medication on hand.⁴

TMA recognizes Texas school nurses and school personnel serve a crucial role in caring for the health of children at school. It is important, as Senate Bill 294 proposes, to ensure school nurses and volunteers have the proper training to appropriately administer medication for respiratory distress to students who are undiagnosed with asthma.

However, only a physician can diagnose asthma. Asthma diagnoses are based on a variety of factors, including the patient's symptoms, detailed medical history, physical examination, and even lung tests. The various complexities and health implications involved with a child experiencing respiratory distress should be appropriately reviewed by a physician. Therefore, TMA respectfully recommends that any student undiagnosed with asthma who receives albuterol or other medications for respiratory distress at school be subsequently seen by a physician as soon as possible that same day. This is important for the student's respiratory health and to confirm the respiratory distress is due to an asthma attack and not another health issue, such as an allergic reaction or respiratory infection.

TMA looks forward to working with this committee to find solutions toward the common goal of keeping our Texas children healthy and safe when they go to learn in the classroom. Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments. For further questions, please contact Matt Dowling, TMA director of public affairs, at matt.dowling@texmed.org, or Kaavya Venkat, TMA public health policy analyst, at kaavya.venkat@texmed.org.

¹ Albuterol Side Effects. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/asthma-attack/expert-answers/albuterol-side-effects/faq-20058088>

² 2022 Global Initiative for Asthma Main Report. <https://ginasthma.org/gina-reports/>

³ Salbutamol Inhaler. <https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/salbutamol-inhaler/>

⁴ Albuterol in Schools. <https://aafa.org/advocacy/key-issues/access-to-medications/albuterol-in-schools/>