

## NEWS RELEASE

### **Commissioner Gwen Markham to lead Board's approval of new Oakland Together School Nurse Initiative proposed by county executive**

*More than five dozen new school nurses to deploy and help county schools*

**June 11, 2020, OAKLAND COUNTY, MI.** – Earlier today, Commissioner **Gwen Markham** (D-Novi) stood in support alongside Oakland County Executive David Coulter at a press conference as he proposed a new \$2 million project between the county and Oakland Schools to ensure students, school staff and families are safe when they return to school in the fall.

The Oakland Together School Nurse Initiative would employ 68 nurses to work with schools to develop COVID-19 prevention strategies. These nurses would then serve individual school districts to provide preventive services and early identification of problems, interventions and referrals related to the pandemic. In addition, they would work with the districts to facilitate health management and care for students during the school day. Oakland Schools Superintendent Dr. Wanda Cook-Robinson also joined the press conference today expressing strong support for this new initiative.

“The health and safety of Oakland County residents is our number one priority – especially through this pandemic,” Markham said. “We know how quickly the coronavirus can spread from person to person, so it is an honor to lead approval of this new school nurse initiative that protects students and makes our schools safer for their return in the fall.”

Markham will lead the effort for Board approval later this month.

This initiative follows guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which recommends that each school has a point of contact to respond to COVID-19 concerns. Through the program, the nurses will also connect schools with the Oakland County Health Division to ensure students, staff and parents have a trusted source for information related to the pandemic.

“Over recent years, our Board has built a close relationship with our local schools by providing funding for touchless water bottle refilling stations and the launch of Oakland County Better with Breakfast, our

universal breakfast program in area schools,” Board Chairman **David T. Woodward** (D-Royal Oak) said. “This school nurse initiative is the next step in strengthening our partnership and protecting the public health of our students and teachers to keep our county safe.”

Woodward will convene the Board in the next couple of weeks to take up this important request. The \$2 million in funding would come from the federal CARES Act. The program is believed to be the first of its kind in the state.

“We know the concern the virus has caused among students, parents, school faculty and staff,” Coulter has said. “We are working closely with our partners at Oakland Schools to provide prevention strategies that will allow our schools to resume the important work of educating our young people. We want everyone to have confidence we are doing everything we can to provide a safe and healthy learning environment.”

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