

For Immediate Release

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American Diabetes Association: Diabetes School Care Act Significant Step in Meeting Medical and Educational Needs of Indiana Students with Diabetes

ADA fought hard for legislation, signed into law by Governor Daniels, to ensure that children with diabetes in public schools have equal educational opportunities

Indianapolis, IN (May 9, 2007) – The American Diabetes Association (ADA) applauded the signing of the “Diabetes School Care Act,” legislation that will help ensure that Indiana public schools are responsive to the medical and educational needs of students with diabetes. Governor Daniels signed the bill into law on Friday, May 4, 2007. The Association, including volunteers throughout the State, was a primary backer of the bipartisan legislation, which will allow school personnel to be trained in diabetes care appropriate for the student and allow students with diabetes to self manage their disease on school property. Diabetes management is accomplished with blood glucose monitoring, administration of insulin and other medications, as well as proper nutrition and exercise. Many children are able to handle their own daily care, while some may need adult assistance. Representative David Cheatham (D-North Vernon), House Bill 1116’s author, and Senators Sue Landske (R-Cedar Lake) and Earline Rogers (D-Gary), sponsored this important legislation which helps make schools safer and provides a healthier environment for children with diabetes.

“This legislation is very exciting and reassuring. Now, more than ever, schools need to be responsive to the medical and educational needs of students with diabetes,” said Elizabeth Hall, Chairman of the ADA’s Leadership Council in Indianapolis, who has type 1 diabetes. “Coping with this serious, chronic disease is difficult for our children already. They should be able to attend school knowing that they will have the proper care and same educational opportunities that their peers do. We need to ensure that students with diabetes can learn in a healthy and safe environment. This bill goes a long way toward making that a reality for children with diabetes throughout Indiana, and we applaud the bill’s sponsors for their leadership in the Legislature and Governor Daniels for signing it into law.”

The Diabetes School Care Act establishes that a diabetes management and treatment plan be developed by the student’s health care team so his or her needs and the school’s responsibilities are clearly stated. The bill states that while the school nurse has the central role in the provision and coordination of diabetes-related care at school, school personnel who wish to volunteer as health aides will also be trained to provide supplemental diabetes care, particularly when the school nurse is unavailable.

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Additionally, the bill ensures that schools are open toward blood glucose monitoring, offering students the ability to monitor in the classroom or wherever they happen to be. The bill also addresses insulin administration, whether it is performed by the student or a properly trained school staff member.

Said Sen. Landske, one of the bill's sponsors: "Effective diabetes management is crucial for the immediate safety of students with diabetes, for their long-term health, to ensure that students with diabetes are ready to learn and to participate fully in school activities and to minimize the possibility that diabetes-related emergencies will disrupt classroom activities. The passage of this legislation will enable schools to ensure a safe learning environment for students with diabetes."

"Students with diabetes deserve this assistance at school so they can spend more time concentrating on learning and less time out of the classroom to manage their condition," Senator Earline Rogers said. "As the number of American children living with diabetes grows, the need for care in schools will continue to increase. I'm very pleased that we are able to provide this assistance to our students."

Added Rep. Cheatham: "The idea for the important part of this legislation was brought to me by Hunter Sego, a 4th grader at Lydia Middleton School in Madison. Hunter and his family led the charge for volunteer care for diabetic student based on his own experiences as a diabetic. Because of his courage and determination, Hunter Sego helped more than anyone to pass this legislation that will help over 5,000 diabetic students in the State of Indiana."

This legislation addresses a host of issues that students with diabetes have had to deal with in the past. During the debate on the legislation, a number of parents and children with diabetes highlighted issues concerning students' difficulty to properly manage their disease at school. For instance, at a March hearing in the House Committee on Public Education, Kathy Sego and her 10-year-old son, Hunter, of Madison, Indiana, spoke of some difficulties Hunter faced after being diagnosed. Hunter was given some "rules" to follow while at school. Initially, he was not allowed to carry supplies in his book bag. Eventually, the school allowed him to carry supplies. He could only test his sugar and receive insulin in the office. If he was low, he had to wait in the office. If he was high, he had to call his parents to come give him insulin. By having to go to the office to test his blood sugars, Hunter missed valuable class time and put his health in jeopardy.

When Hunter was in 3rd grade he was told by his physician that he needed an insulin pump due to elevating blood sugars. When the school nurse and principal were informed, Hunter was told he needed to go the "diabetic school" in his district leaving his friends.

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In Indiana, there is currently a school nurse assigned to every school district, not every school.

In Hunter's school district there is one nurse for the "diabetic school" and one that travels to all the other schools. This year, Hunter was accepted in to the gifted and talented program at Lydia Middleton School which is a model program for this new law. By providing trained volunteers, Hunter and his mom, and the many others like them will not have to go to school worrying whether or not an adult will be there to help the child if they should need assistance managing their diabetes.

This is important to all children with diabetes, because according to Hunter Sego, "It (diabetes) doesn't stop just because I'm at school."

Alex Sandberg, eighth grader at Hamilton Southeastern Junior High, diagnosed with Type 1 at the age of 10, wanted to help other children with diabetes. Alex sees her self as one of the lucky ones. Alex knows that her 504 medical plan protects her and keeps her safe. It is important to control diabetes in school as well as out of school. Many diabetic children are restricted in their ability to test and treat while at school. Tight control of diabetes as a child has positive effects on long term health. When asked about the new law, Alex says "I appreciated the opportunity to tell my story to the Indiana legislatures. The thought of speaking to them initially made me nervous. But, they listened and I am proud to have helped other kids. This bill will help diabetic children throughout Indiana be healthier, happier, and safer." As stated by Alex's mom, Sue Sandberg, "This is not a horrible disease - it can be managed."

Diabetes is one of this nation's most prevalent, debilitating, deadly and costly diseases. Nearly 21 million American children and adults live with diabetes today, another 54 million have pre-diabetes. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in three Americans born in 2000 will develop diabetes in their lifetime if current trends continue.

The American Diabetes Association is the nation's leading voluntary health organization supporting diabetes research, information and advocacy. The Association's advocacy efforts include helping to combat discrimination against people with diabetes; advocating for the increase of federal diabetes research and programs; and improved access to, and quality of, healthcare for people with diabetes. The Association's mission is to prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives of all people affected by diabetes. Founded in 1940, the Association provides service to hundreds of communities across the country. For more information please call the American Diabetes Association at 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383) or visit www.diabetes.org. Information from both these sources is available in English and Spanish.