

My name is Patty Palladino. I am a mother of an 8 year old Type 1 Diabetic-- diagnosed at age 6, a few weeks shy of entering 1st grade.

I would like to speak regarding Teacher/Principal/school staff training and education, and school policies to improve student achievement--especially regarding students in NYS who have Type 1 Diabetes.

Type 1 diabetes, by basic definition, means the pancreas has stopped working. Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease that is not caused by a bad diet or eating too much sugar. Type 1 diabetes occurs when your own body attacks itself--shutting down the pancreas and the exact cause is unknown. Type 1 diabetics must inject or infuse insulin to live--but insulin is not a cure and the affects of this disease are still present even while on an insulin regimen. Type 1 Diabetics must constantly monitor their blood glucose level--in some cases 12 or more times in a 24 hour period. They must take measures to keep their glucose level in range by eating/drinking when it is low, or injecting insulin when it is high. Type 1 diabetics will never outgrow this disease and cannot control or prevent the affects this disease may have on their health or daily life including--but not limited to-- blurry vision, ability to concentrate, ability to think clearly, ability to comprehend what they read or what is being said to them, ability to speak, and even death--when their blood glucose is out of range and not treated.

My son, and many other students in NYS with type 1 diabetes- are having difficulty in school--learning, participating in all programs--succeeding. Why? Because most school staff do not understand the complexity of Type 1 diabetes, the affects this disease has on the ability to learn and therefore cannot successfully support a Type 1 Diabetic student. In the past diabetic students were sent to school with high blood glucose levels under the belief that it was a safer option. Today we know that consent high glucose levels result in heart disease, kidney failure, blindness, and early death in the long term for diabetics. Type 1 specialists now know that keeping diabetic students within their target blood glucose range is the best practice.

What does this mean for schools? It means Type 1 students will need more than the nurse to understand and care for their needs in the school setting, will need 504 and IEP plans, and will need ALL staff they interact with to have a basic knowledge of type 1 diabetes and what to do when a diabetic emergency occurs.

Some life threatening issues, plan implementation, and derogatory remarks toward Type 1 Diabetic students that have occurred in schools in NYS this past year are:

- a child was given too much insulin--because the dose was figured using calories of the food instead of carbohydrates
- a child was injected with insulin to cover food--then was denied the food the insulin was meant to cover by a full time staff members

-some children were not allowed to check their blood glucose level in the classroom or anywhere in the school setting--- the children were made to go to the nurse-- missing valuable instruction because of this

-A parent had to pick up a child who was experiencing a high glucose level--because, and I quote "I don't have time for this" said the school nurse--and the nurse chose not to learn from the parent how to correct a high glucose so the child could remain in school

-Type 1 students have been denied the process when seeking a 504/IEP plan, denied needed modifications on a plan--such as eating/drinking on the bus when necessary, time off the clock when testing, access to bathroom, water, the nurse when necessary.

-Some type 1 children do not have a trained adult/nurse available for after school activities---eliminating the Type 1 child from being able to participate in these activities--such as science club, language club, sports--all of which enhance the child's academic performance and are needed on those future college resumes.

-comments were made by school staff in front of the Type 1 children--such as 'my grandfather died from that,' 'diabetes is a distraction in the classroom,' and 'the child needs to take care of their own diabetes.'

Are these issues--mistakes made by school staff--absolutely. Are they acceptable practice--absolutely not.

The NYS Education Reform Commission can remedy these issues by making it mandatory for all school staff in NYS who have a Type 1 Diabetic in their building--attend Diabetes Education seminars. These workshops are provided FREE OF CHARGE for schools in NYS through the NYS Health Department. Educating our Educators--all educators including District Superintendents, administrators, teachers, food service, and members of the transportation department --is needed to ensure the success and safety of type 1 diabetic students. The NYS Health Department will send Certified Diabetes Educators to ANY school in the state, at a time convenient to the school staff.

In NYS we have staff in-service days. Please ensure this free diabetes education is on the agenda for staff on such a day.

We need Policy changes--specifically-- written time frames for implementing 504 plans to improve Type 1 Diabetic student achievement and ensure a plan that will keep diabetics medically safe in schools. Currently there are no written time frames for processing a request for a 504 plan. This past year, some districts in NYS- refused to process 504 requests--saying 'we don't do those for Type 1 Diabetics' Refusing to

process a 504 referral -- for any child is wrong--but In the case of a Type 1 diabetic-refusing a 504 plan is against the The Americans with Disabilities Act. The Act expressly provides that diabetes is a physical impairment. I quote section 12102 “the operation of a major bodily function, such as the endocrine system, is considered a major life activity.” The pancreas is part of the endocrine system. District Employees-- charged with implementing 504's, IEP's and the like-- should be mandated to be educated and knowledgeable on all laws pertaining to children with disabilities--ALL disabilities-including Type 1 diabetes. They should be mandated to have basic knowledge of the disease or disability being evaluated--including type 1 diabetes. Some districts took over 5 months or more to implement a 504 plan for type 1 students this past year--and some of those plans still do not include trained adult/nurse available to administer insulin or glucagon during after school programs-- eliminating what by law the school is obligated to provide. Section 504 and The American's with Disabilities Act section 12132-provide that any student with a disability, defined by federal law--such as type 1 diabetes- cannot be denied the opportunity to participate in a benefit or service afforded to a non-disabled student--including extracurricular activities.

Type 1 students in NYS take standardized tests and regents exams. They MAY need to 'stop the clock' during such a test to care for their health if experiencing a high or low glucose level. Type 1 students NEED a 504 plan with this modification. The performance on a test--would be skewed if a diabetic is unable to stop during a test and correct a high or low glucose level because when levels are NOT in range a diabetic student is unable to concentrate, comprehend what they are reading, become light headed, and could pass out, begin having seizures, and worst case-die. When going off to college--a student with a 504 plan in place-- will be able to transfer the plan over to the college setting---without one--the diabetic college student does not have protection if a diabetic issue occurs during a college exam. The college student without a 504 plan rolled over from their formative years--fails the exam-if they need to stop or are unable to finish due to a diabetes issue.

This disease is not forgiving, and takes 24hour / 7 day a week/ 365 days a year monitoring. We can follow the doctors orders to a T--and still our children can suffer the affects of this incurable disease. We need school staff to have a basic understanding of this complex disease and be educated about it, we need policies that ensure 504 plans are put in place for Type 1 students- in a timely fashion, and that the staff implementing the plans know disability laws, how the disease affects the child and why basic modifications such as eating/drinking on the bus, time off the clock when taking a test, and the ability to check their blood glucose and correct it as needed- ANYWHERE in the school setting are necessary.

I want my son's report card, and every other Type 1 Diabetics report card-to reflect their level of intelligence---not the level of how diabetes affects their lives.

Type 1 students can be your Valedictorians, your sports stars, your student council Presidents---they just need some assistance and modifications from their school districts. Please ensure they get them.

In closing, thank you for your time and your commitment to students in NYS. Please consider what I spoke of here today, and take steps to ensure the success and safety of Type 1 students in NYS.