



**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
Wednesday, March 23, 2011**

SB 1202, An Act Concerning The State's Health Care Workforce

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **SB 1202, An Act Concerning The State's Health Care Workforce**. CHA supports this bill.

SB 1202 calls for the collaboration of the Department of Public Health, the Department of Higher Education, the Labor Department, the Office of Workforce Competitiveness, the University of Connecticut, the University of Connecticut School of Medicine, the University of Connecticut School of Dentistry, the Connecticut State University System, and the regional community- and technical college system to develop an initiative to address the state's healthcare workforce shortage.

The initiative must seek to increase the number of healthcare workers in the state through the offering of expanded and enhanced educational programs at public institutions of higher education, and include elements that: expand existing programs to promote increased enrollment and retain students; develop programs designed to assimilate displaced workers and individuals seeking career changes into the healthcare workforce; recruit and retain healthcare workers from underserved populations; establish collaborative relationships between healthcare professions that are assistive to efforts to improve access to healthcare; identify mechanisms for ensuring healthcare professional practice at the highest level of competence; develop distance-learning and on-the-job training initiatives; and streamline Department of Public Health processes to expedite licensure for qualified out-of-state applicants.

It is important to stay focused on ensuring there will be an adequate healthcare workforce for Connecticut now and in the future. Nearly a half million of the state's three and a half million citizens are age 65 and older, and as the population continues to age, healthcare demand will rise at the same time caregivers retire and join the ranks of those needing care. In addition to the demographic age shift that may leave Connecticut facing a serious unmet need for healthcare workers in the not-too-distant future, the population is becoming increasingly diverse requiring the development of a more diverse workforce that is capable of responding to the healthcare needs of our communities.

SB 1202 serves to maintain the vigilance that Connecticut must have to address the shortage of healthcare workers, and the bill's provisions for preparation, collaboration, and competency are consistent with projected workforce needs that will likely occur with healthcare reform. SB 1202 builds on work that has been carried out by state agencies, public educational institutions, and the Allied Health Workforce Policy Board (hereafter referred to as "the Policy Board") and articulates some enhanced partnerships and new areas for consideration.

Over the past six years the Policy Board has developed information on Connecticut's healthcare workforce needs, issues, and initiatives, and made recommendations to the Connecticut General Assembly regarding addressing healthcare workforce shortages. The Policy Board recently has taken a major role in carrying out a project supported by a United States Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration planning grant awarded to the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission to develop a strategic healthcare workforce plan for the state. While the Policy Board has not been charged with addressing physician shortages, the preliminary work on the project does involve exploration of this area of concern.

CHA welcomes the continued focus that SB 1202 brings to the critical issue of healthcare workforce shortages. We recommend that, as appropriate, the collaboration identified in the bill work with the Allied Healthcare Workforce Policy Board and support the elements of the initiative as provided for in SB 1202.

Thank you for your consideration of our position.

For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.

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