



**TESTIMONY OF  
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE  
HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE  
Tuesday, February 7, 2023**

**HB 5438, An Act Establishing A Debt-Free State College Program For Employees  
Of Day Care Facilities, Home Health Care Agencies And Nursing Homes**

**HB 5441, An Act Concerning College Graduates Who Work In The Fields Of  
Education Or Health Care In The State**

**SB 936, An Act Concerning Workforce Development**

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **HB 5438, An Act Establishing A Debt-Free State College Program For Employees Of Day Care Facilities, Home Health Care Agencies And Nursing Homes, HB 5441, An Act Concerning College Graduates Who Work In The Fields Of Education Or Health Care In The State, and SB 936, An Act Concerning Workforce Development.** CHA supports the legislation and requests to have hospital employees added to HB 5438.

Connecticut hospitals continue to meet the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and are now facing new challenges of treating sicker patients than they saw before the pandemic, with a dedicated but smaller workforce who are exemplary but exhausted. They are also experiencing significant financial hardships brought on by record inflation. Through it all, hospitals have been steadfast, providing high-quality care for everyone who walks through their doors, regardless of ability to pay.

Healthcare workers in Connecticut have been exceptional in responding to the pandemic and all of its impacts over the last three years. But it has taken a toll on them – adding more stress, leading to exhaustion and burnout. Challenges that existed before the pandemic have been exacerbated. Through it all, they have maintained exceptional care for patients.

As we continue to respond to the effects of the pandemic and its impact over the last three years and look to build the future healthcare delivery system in our state, we know that we need to expand Connecticut's healthcare workforce.

Connecticut hospitals are working every day to support their workers and are on the forefront of creating new ways to keep hospital workers resilient and enhance retention and recruitment. Providing financial incentives, identifying opportunities for career advancement, and supporting continuing education are important ways hospitals are supporting the

workforce. Additionally, hospitals are partnering with colleges and technical schools to develop curriculum and training to support future healthcare needs and identifying the clinical placements that will be needed to support this enhanced training.

We have also built a strong partnership with the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS), working together to support initiatives to rapidly retrain Connecticut workers for jobs in healthcare (CareerConneCT), create regional sector partnerships to enhance collaboration in communities across the state, develop healthcare career pathways for high school students, and influence the development of the CT Health Horizons program.

The last program noted, CT Health Horizons, is the product of the work the General Assembly completed during its last session, supported by the allocation of \$35 million in American Recovery Act dollars. The program and funding are critical to the development of the future nursing and behavioral health workforce in the state.

We must maintain our progress in supporting and growing the healthcare workforce. HB 5438, legislation to create a debt-free college program for certain workers, including many in healthcare; HB 5441, legislation to create a student-loan forgiveness program for graduates of higher education who pursue careers in healthcare; and, SB 936, legislation requiring the Board of Regents for Higher Education to conduct a study regarding workforce development issues in the state, would all contribute to the all-hands-on-deck approach we need to take to meet the employment demands in the healthcare field. CHA supports these efforts and encourages the Committee to take action in support of each.

We also respectfully request that employees of hospitals be added as an additional group of workers supported in HB 5438. Hospitals employ thousands of individuals in both clinical and non-clinical roles who would benefit from the opportunity to seek career advancement through higher education. Access to these educational opportunities play an important part of hospitals' efforts develop career ladders for their employees.

Finally, as the Committee and General Assembly consider additional ways to support the healthcare workforce, we request your consideration of direct assistance to hospitals. As hospitals confront significant financial headwinds, exacerbated by the need to hire temporary, contract labor, a partnership with the state to support the workforce is now more important than ever. State funding for recruitment bonuses, student loan payment assistance, cash retention bonuses, tuition assistance, workplace violence prevention, and other forms of training can all support retention and recruitment.

We look forward to continuing to work together to support our state's healthcare workforce and expand it for the future.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.