

**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
AGING COMMITTEE
Tuesday, March 5, 2024**

**HB 5001, An Act Supporting Connecticut Seniors And The Improvement Of
Nursing And Home-Based Care**

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **HB 5001, An Act Supporting Connecticut Seniors And The Improvement Of Nursing And Home-Based Care**. CHA offers the following comments on the bill.

Connecticut hospitals are critical to their communities. They are confronting the challenges posed by a post-pandemic healthcare system with an exemplary healthcare workforce that continues to provide outstanding care. But challenges remain. Hospitals are treating sicker patients, it continues to be challenging to hire and retain staff, and the financial headwinds are grave. Through it all, hospitals are steadfast, providing high-quality 24-hour care for everyone who walks through their doors, focusing on making Connecticut's healthcare system more equitable, and driving world-class innovation right here in Connecticut.

Healthcare workers are uniquely and disproportionately at risk of workplace violence. Citing an April 2020 Bureau of Labor Statistics Fact Sheet, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) noted that healthcare workers accounted for 73% of all nonfatal workplace injuries and illness due to violence in 2018. More troubling is that the percentage has been steadily increasing for at least the past 10 years.¹ CHA appreciates the Committee's attention to improving the safety of the home health workforce as all healthcare employers in the state continue the focus on protecting healthcare employees from violence.

Section 8 of the legislation requires the Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection, in consultation with the Commissioner of Public Health, to develop and implement a plan to expand fingerprinting locations in the state. CHA supports this section of the bill. For many healthcare employees, state and national criminal history records checks are a requirement of employment and licensing. Currently, the fingerprinting required for the checks is done at one of the State Police Troops and Districts or the Middletown State Police Headquarters. For some prospective healthcare workers, especially those who may lack transportation, getting to one of the 15 locations across the state is either not possible or delays the application process for employment. Healthcare employees across the state are experiencing a workforce shortage, and addressing the shortage will require an all-hands-on-

¹ Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Memorandum dated November 28, 2022, Ref: QSO-23-04-Hospitals.

deck approach. Expanding the places where fingerprinting requirements can be completed is an important step to reduce barriers to employment.

Sections 11 and 12 of the legislation require a home healthcare agency, home health aide agency, hospice agency, and a homemaker-companion agency to send a photograph of each employee scheduled to provide services to a client via registered or certified mail, electronic mail, or text message prior to a scheduled visit. CHA encourages the Committee to clarify the requirement by specifying whether the required photograph must be sent before each appointment, regardless of whether the same employee visits the client for each visit, or whether a photograph must be sent prior to each new employee visiting a client. Additionally, CHA encourages the Committee to consider how clients would prefer to receive this information. For many, receiving the photograph via electronic mail or text may not be the preferred method or a method available to them.

CHA also encourages the Committee to look at workforce development. Connecticut has an exceptional healthcare workforce that is committed to serving patients every day. A robust and growing healthcare workforce is required to support healthcare delivery throughout Connecticut. Unfortunately, our current system is not training or attracting enough individuals interested in high-demand healthcare careers.

Together, we can build on the investments already made to expand educational and training opportunities, ease the path to careers in healthcare, support workforce retention, and enhance the safety of current and future healthcare workers.

As the Committee and General Assembly consider additional ways to support the healthcare workforce, CHA requests the Committee's consideration of the following:

- Review and update existing state laws to enhance protections for the healthcare workforce against violence in healthcare settings
- Provide funding to support workplace violence prevention
- Provide direct state funding to hospitals and health systems for recruitment, retention, and training for healthcare workers and relief from the increased costs of hiring independent contractors and temporary travel nurses and crucial staffing premium pay
- Support approaches to create healthcare career pathways that help reduce barriers to careers in healthcare
- Support state approval of interstate licensing compacts
- Examine how modifications to regulations regarding education and experience would increase the number of healthcare educators and candidates for employment

CHA looks forward to continuing to work together to support and expand our state's healthcare workforce.

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