



**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
HIGHER EDUCATION AND
EMPLOYMENT ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE
Thursday, February 22, 2024**

SB 106, An Act Concerning Workforce Development Initiatives In The State

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **SB 106, An Act Concerning Workforce Development Initiatives In The State**. CHA supports 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.

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 healthcare careers that are in-demand.

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 enhancing 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 they are identifying the clinical placements that will be needed to support this enhanced training.

CHA has also built a strong partnership with the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS), working together to support initiatives that rapidly retrain Connecticut workers for jobs in healthcare (CareerConneCT), create regional sector partnerships to enhance collaboration in communities across the state, and develop healthcare career pathways for high schools students.

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. We must maintain our progress in supporting and growing the healthcare workforce. SB 106, legislation requiring the Board of Regents for Higher Education to conduct a study regarding workforce development issues in the state, would contribute to the all-hands-on-deck approach we need to meet the employment demands in the healthcare field. CHA supports this effort and encourages the Committee to take action in support of the legislation.

As the Committee and General Assembly consider additional ways to support the healthcare workforce, we request your 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 for relief from the increased costs of contract labor 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

We look 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.