



**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
Thursday, March 11, 2004**

**HB 5635, An Act Concerning Certified Medical Assistants
And Testing by Respiratory Therapists**

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony on **HB 5635, An Act Concerning Certified Medical Assistants And Testing by Respiratory Therapists**. CHA supports section 2 of the bill, which would clarify that licensed respiratory therapists are able to perform purified protein derivative (PPD) testing to identify patient exposure to tuberculosis.

As individuals can be exposed to, develop, and spread tuberculosis to others without their knowledge, PPD testing is an important way to control the spread of the disease. PPD testing is performed by inserting a needle just under the top layer of skin and injecting biologic and inert material to form a weal (bubble), which is then monitored at 48 hours to see if there has been a reaction indicating exposure to tuberculosis. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that healthcare providers administer tuberculin testing to all patients who may be more susceptible to contracting tuberculosis. These groups include immuno-compromised patients, recent immigrants from countries where tuberculosis is prevalent, and some populations that are medically underserved.

According to the current Connecticut practice act, respiratory therapists' primary functions are the "therapy, management, rehabilitation, diagnostic evaluation and care of patients who have deficiencies or abnormalities which effect the cardiopulmonary system." Permitting respiratory therapists to administer PPD will capitalize on their expertise in identifying patients who have been exposed to tuberculosis, and obtain appropriate treatment for these patients when warranted. The performance of the PPD test does not involve the administration of medication, is associated with minimal risk, and is far less invasive than many other procedures which are routinely performed by respiratory therapists.

Additionally, permitting respiratory therapists to administer PPD tests will aid hospitals in the routine testing of employees for tuberculosis exposure, thereby assisting in promoting both employee and patient safety.

Thank you for consideration of our position.

JJR:CCB:pas

