



**TESTIMONY
OF THE
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE MEETING**

Tuesday, February 26, 2002

SB 321, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A NURSE INTERVENTION PROGRAM

The Connecticut Hospital Association appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of **SB 321, An Act Establishing A Nurse Intervention Program.**

Providing an alternative, voluntary and private opportunity for the rehabilitation of licensed nurses with substance abuse or certain other problems in order than they may return to treating patients is both appropriate and necessary.

SB 321 would provide a system to immediately intervene with nurses who are practicing with impairments and ensure that they get the treatment and rehabilitation they need. Connecticut is one of only thirteen states that do not have such a program. The punitive approach of our current system creates barriers to nurses reporting impairments and getting help. The lack of a constructive alternative to the standard disciplinary process is no doubt inhibiting nurses with such impairments from coming forward for treatment. Statistics from states with alternative programs demonstrate that more nurses will voluntarily enter alternative programs.

Connecticut hospitals are facing a nursing shortage that is growing at an alarming rate. At the same time we know that our nurses are not immune to the diseases of alcoholism and drug addiction that afflict a substantial percentage of the general population. The ability to provide a safe and effective treatment process for nurses with impairments is essential, both to provide patient safety and to return the nurse safely to the bedside at the appropriate time with structured monitoring.

An alternative program with a focus on immediate treatment, guidance into recovery, relapse prevention and reentry into safe nursing practice with a highly structured format for monitoring is the best way to ensure that nurses get the support and help they need in a safe and carefully supervised manner and that patients get safe and effective care.

With the enactment of this bill, the Nurse Intervention Program would be established under the Board of Examiners for Nursing through a professional organization or a subsidiary. The program would be funded through a license renewal surcharge that is supported by the nursing community.

We urge you to support this legislation. Thank you.

JDI:pas