

**TESTIMONY OF
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BEFORE THE HIGHER EDUCATION AND
EMPLOYMENT ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE
Tuesday, March 2, 2004**

**SB 515, Act Addressing The Nursing Shortage
SB 517, An Act Concerning Workforce Development
SB 519, An Act Concerning Allied Health Workforce Needs
HB 5570, An Act Concerning A Comprehensive Connecticut Workforce
Strategic Plan**

Good Morning Senator Hartley, Representative Kerensky, and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. I am Liz Beaudin, Director of Nursing and Workforce Initiatives for the Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) and I appreciate the opportunity to testify on behalf of CHA and its members in support of **SB 515, An Act Addressing The Nursing Shortage; SB 517, An Act Concerning Workforce Development; SB 519, An Act Concerning Allied Workforce Needs; and HB 5570, An Act Concerning A Comprehensive Connecticut Workforce Strategic Plan.** The primary focus of my comments will be SB 515 and SB 519.

SB 515 calls for the establishment of incentive programs to encourage partnerships between hospitals and healthcare institutions and community-technical colleges to expand faculty capacity, and initiatives designed to prepare more nursing educators through the provision of grants to institutions of higher learning that work collaboratively with hospitals to expand such programs. The bill also requires the Department of Higher Education to conduct an assessment of the capacity of the state system to educate nurses and report to the legislature not later than January 2005.

We believe the passage and enactment of the provisions of this bill will be an excellent step toward addressing the nursing shortage in Connecticut. According to the Health Resources and Services Administration, Connecticut is projected to experience the fifth most severe shortage of registered nurses (RNs) in the country with an anticipated 54.9% shortfall between supply and demand by the year 2020 if appropriate action is not taken.

On state and national levels, there have been some preliminary positive developments in addressing the nursing shortage. Strong efforts in raising awareness and in recruitment

have resulted in rising enrollments at nursing schools. The National League for Nursing (NLN) reported a 15% overall increase for all types of programs that prepare RNs in 2003. However, the lack of sufficient numbers of qualified nursing faculty members to teach nursing students has become a serious barrier to building the nursing workforce. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing reported that 11,000 qualified students were turned away from baccalaureate programs in 2003 due do limited numbers of faculty, clinical sites, and classroom space. In Connecticut, community college programs currently have substantial waiting lists and baccalaureate programs have been able to accommodate relatively small numbers of students from substantially large applicant pools.

Several of Connecticut's hospitals and schools of nursing have begun to collaborate in developing some short term solutions to this serious problem, but more needs to be done on a larger scale and with all due speed. The NLN describes the increases in nursing graduates of 2003 as positive but still woefully inadequate to meet the projected demand. It is vital that we cease turning away aspiring nurses from our schools of nursing and we must accomplish this by growing the force of faculty members who are qualified to teach the nurses of the future and by developing a comprehensive understanding of Connecticut's nursing education capacity. This problem needs to be addressed through the collaborative efforts of schools, providers and government and this bill provides mechanisms for such action.

SB 519, An Act Concerning Allied Health Workforce Development Needs, calls for the creation of a Health Care Workforce Policy Board to carry out certain planning and oversight activities in a coordinated approach to ensuring the adequacy of the healthcare workforce in Connecticut. Such activities include monitoring relevant data and trends, implementing plans to promote the recruitment and retention of healthcare workers, making recommendations to promote diversity, and developing recommendations regarding financial and other mechanisms to assist students pursuing careers in healthcare.

Addressing the issues of the healthcare workforce shortage is a complex matter requiring the involvement of multiple constituencies. A coordinated and state-supported approach would provide for integration of efforts, recognition of best practices, avoidance of duplication of efforts, and maximization of use of limited resources.

There is a significant urgency for Connecticut to initiate a comprehensive process to address healthcare workforce needs due to the convergence of rising healthcare demand and state demographics. Connecticut has the seventh oldest population in the nation according to the JOBS 2010 report prepared by the Connecticut Economic Resources Center (CERC). The state's aging population is a major factor in our worsening healthcare workforce shortage.

We need to know the current and future availability of healthcare resources for hospitals and other healthcare providers. Our hope is that the current online licensure renewal initiative underway will provide critical information about the location, age, and

qualifications of the healthcare workforce to support the work of the Health Care Workforce Policy Board.

In addition to the work that has begun on the nursing shortage, it is essential that detailed information and effective strategies be developed to address the entire spectrum of shortages in allied health.

The establishment of the Health Policy Board will bring critically needed focus and momentum to address healthcare workforce issues in the state of Connecticut and will provide an important mechanism to keep legislators informed about the state's ability to meet its citizens' healthcare needs going forward.

To the extent that the provisions of **SB 517, An Act Concerning Workforce Development**, can be applied to healthcare, particularly the Innovation Challenge Grant program, CHA would welcome the opportunity to work with the Office of Workforce Competitiveness as we have on other projects to develop initiatives that relate to healthcare.

With regard to **HB 5570, An Act Concerning A Comprehensive Connecticut Workforce Strategic Plan**, we are completely supportive of the concept of planning for workforce development; our only concern is that it may be duplicative of the role and responsibility of existing entities such as the Connecticut Education and Training Commission.

We very much appreciate the support and commitment of this Committee, and particularly its Chairs, to making real progress in addressing Connecticut's healthcare workforce challenges.

Thank you for your consideration.

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