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Connecticut Projected to Have Second Worst Nursing Shortage in Nation

Wallingford, May 17 - Hospitals throughout Connecticut are experiencing vacancy rates of between 6% and 11% for critical healthcare professionals - a situation expected to worsen in the next decade, according to a new report released today by the Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA).

According to the report, *Averting Crisis: Ensuring Healthcare for Future Generations in Connecticut*, projections are that by 2020 Connecticut will be facing a shortage of 22,400 nurses, giving Connecticut the distinction of having the second worst nursing shortage in the nation - second in severity only to Alaska.

The shortage of critical healthcare professionals goes beyond nursing, however. As shown in the CHA report, hospitals today are facing shortages of pharmacists, respiratory therapists, physical therapists, and other critical caregivers.

“This report is a wake-up call that Connecticut is facing a looming crisis,” said Jennifer Jackson, CHA President and CEO. “Connecticut hospitals, in collaboration with government agencies, legislators, schools, and other partners, are engaged in a number of initiatives, as highlighted in the report, to build a stronger workforce for tomorrow. The scope and severity of the projected shortages, however, require a more steadfast commitment from the state.”

The CHA report points out that the aging of the population is placing more demands on the healthcare system at a time when there is a shrinking and aging pool of workers, and

that these shifting demographics are impacting the number of faculty available to train nurses and other healthcare professionals. In fact, during the years 2004 and 2005, approximately 2,000 qualified applicants were turned away from Connecticut nursing schools due to a shortage of qualified faculty.

To avert this looming crisis, CHA recommends a six-point plan that includes expanding the number of nursing and other healthcare faculty; enhancing recruitment and support (e.g., scholarships and loan forgiveness programs) for health professions candidates; increasing retention and employee engagement of current caregivers through pilot programs around the state; establishing a comprehensive workforce database; creating career ladders and other “growing” initiatives; and raising public awareness of nursing and other healthcare professions.

Averting Crisis: Ensuring Healthcare for Future Generations in Connecticut is available at www.cthosp.org/Advocacy/documents/Averting_Crisis-HCWorkforceReport.pdf and printed copies are available by contacting Jason Fernandez at (203) 294-7379.

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