CHA Meets With Senior Aides on Canadian Nurses Issue

Jim Iacobellis, CHA’s Director of Government Relations, met with the senior health aides of most of the state’s Congressional delegation in Washington yesterday to urge their support for legislative action to exempt all qualified Canadian nurses from a Homeland Security Department rule on certification for healthcare workers.

The final rule will restrict the employment eligibility of qualified and properly licensed non-immigrant Canadian nurses currently working in Connecticut and at least 10 other states, exacerbating an already severe nursing shortage by requiring about 200 Canadian nurses in Connecticut to go through a lengthy visa screening and certification process and pass a licensing exam similar to one these nurses have already passed.

Connecticut is one of a number of states that licenses Canadian nurses without requiring that they pass the NCLEX, provided they pass the Canadian Nurse Examination in English. The loss of 200 nurses would increase the current RN vacancy rate in Connecticut hospitals by nearly 30%, and estimated replacement costs are as high as $10 million.

Iacobellis discussed the issue with staff members from the offices of Senator Christopher Dodd and Representatives Rosa DeLauro, Nancy Johnson, John Larson, Christopher Shays, and Rob Simmons. In coordination with the American Hospital Association (AHA), he also asked lawmakers to write to Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge, seeking a 12-month delay in the implementation rule. The Connecticut delegation was supportive of the request, and CHA will work with the legislators to get a single letter signed by the entire delegation.

CHA Submits Testimony at Public Hearings

CHA submitted testimony this week to the General Assembly on a variety of pending bills, including legislation on Medicaid reimbursement, labor neutrality agreements, and public health issues.

Steve Frayne, CHA’s Vice President of Finance and Insurance Services, testified before the Human Services Committee on the impact of cuts to the Medicaid, HUSKY, and State-Administered General Assistance (SAGA) programs, while CHA Vice President and Chief of Staff Kim Hostetler testified on two occasions in opposition to a pair of bills that would require recipients of state financial assistance to sign labor neutrality agreements.

Carrie Brady, CHA’s Vice President of Patient Care and Regulatory Services, testified before the Public Health Committee on several bills related to flu vaccines, childhood obesity, and organ donation, and before the Judiciary Committee against a bill that
would impair patient autonomy with respect to living wills.

CHA also submitted testimony to the Select Committee on Children on two bills that affect children placed in residential facilities and to the Environment Committee on motor vehicle emissions standards.

All this week’s testimony is available online at www.cthosp.org.

**Democrats Block Bill to Limit Malpractice Suits**

Senate Democrats in Washington have blocked the latest GOP effort to curb medical malpractice lawsuits, a bill restricting medical malpractice damages against obstetricians and gynecologists.

Republicans in the Senate were unable to get the 60 votes required to force consideration of the bill, but vowed to renew their arguments later in the year. The vote was 48-45. The bill would have limited noneconomic and punitive damages in medical liability lawsuits involving obstetrical and gynecological services, while maintaining unlimited economic damages.

**Liability Forum Covers Possible Reform Measures**

CHA participated with the Connecticut State Medical Society, several county medical associations, and the Connecticut Mutual Insurance Company in a Tort Reform Action Forum yesterday in Hartford.

The forum, which had been postponed last month due to a snowstorm, featured a discussion of medical liability system issues and potential reform measures by physicians, hospital representatives, legislators, and business and insurance industry representatives.

Peter Herbert, M.D., Chief of Staff and Senior Vice President for Medical Affairs at Yale-New Haven Hospital, moderated the forum; Pat Monahan, CHA Vice President and General Counsel, was one of several guest speakers; and Robert Ritz, President and CEO of Saint Mary’s Hospital, served on a panel for a discussion and question-and-answer period.

**ECHN Honored for Nursing Internship Program**

The Summer Internship for Student Nurses Program at Eastern Connecticut Health Network (ECHN) recently won the Modern Healthcare/Sodexho Health-care Services 2003 Spirit of Excellence Award for the team category, which recognizes initiatives that demonstrate commitment to employee retention and recruitment.

The summer internship program began in June of 2003, when ECHN partnered with the University of Connecticut to create the 10-week, 32-hour-per-week work-study program to increase students’ skill and experiences in their areas of clinical interest. The internship has two components: a two-credit course offered through the University of Connecticut, during which the interns functioned as nursing students, and employment for 23 hours weekly as certified nurse aides (CNAs) in the clinical area of interest.

Rosanna Colangelo, R.N., M.S., who has a joint appointment with ECHN and the University of Connecticut School of Nursing, was responsible for designing and implementing the program.

**Educational Program to Address Human Resources Management Basics**

CHA will offer an educational program on the effective management of human resources to help managers and supervisors by increasing their understanding of the importance of human resources policy, practices, and law.

The program, *Human Resources Management Basics*, will be held from 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 9, 2004.

The program will describe the role of managers in effective human resources management and explain the use of job descriptions and competency assessment in establishing and communicating job expectations. The use of corrective action procedures in managing employee performance and the influence of federal and state law on employee hiring and scheduling will also be covered, along with the impact of ADA, Title VII, EEOC, wage and hour laws, FMLA, and workers’ compensation regulations.

For more information on this program, visit the Education section of the CHA website at www.cthosp.org or contact Rhonda Bates at (203) 294-7267 or bates@chime.org.