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TESTIMONY RE: H.B. No 6838 (raised), AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF
TELEMEDICINE TO PROMOTE EFFICIENCY IN THE DELIVERY OF HEALTH
CARE SERVICES.

Public Health Committee Hearing

January 31, 2007

Good morning Senator Handley, Representative Sayers and members of the Public Health Committee.

Thank-you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Nurses' Association (CNA), the professional organization for registered nurses in Connecticut. I am Dr. Mary Jane Williams, past-president of the Connecticut Nurses' Association, current chairperson of its Government Relations Committee and chair and professor of Nursing at the University of Hartford. I have practiced nursing for over 40 years and have been educating nurses in Connecticut for 35 years. We are providing testimony in support of H.B. No. 6838, AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF TELEMEDICINE TO PROMOTE EFFICIENCY IN THE DELIVERY OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES.

The interest in telehealth and telemedicine has intensified in the last decade but the use of telecommunications for care began more than 30 years ago. During this time the ability to move data more quickly over bigger telecommunications lines, development of medical devices used to capture digitally a variety of vital signs and measurements, government interest in use with our veteran's and space programs and the military, and pilot programs and research have all spurred greater uses of this technology based health care modality.

The opportunities for delivering less costly care that decreases hospital stays, increases access, has good patient and staff satisfaction, helps to meet unmet health care needs and

has data that shows positive outcomes makes passage of this bill important. For nursing, with the shortages being currently experienced and predicted to be more significant in the future, it provides opportunities to increase retention of nurses in the profession, keep some of our mature, experienced nurses who want to practice in less physically demanding settings and to maximize resources inclusive of experienced, seasoned expert nurses for supervision and consultation. The practice of delivering primary nursing care telephonically is already available at a number of home health agencies and in insurance companies that provide case management for a variety of diseases. Ultimately this technology allows us to maximize the talent of our workforce and provide high quality care to patients in a variety of settings that otherwise might not have essential life-saving monitoring. It also has the potential of early diagnosis and treatment and decreases recidivism of patients with our most common diagnostic groupings.

It is important to note that there have been numerous pilot projects and research done since the inception of telemedicine. The Telemedicine Information Exchange website and the Pennsylvania Homecare Association website are two of a number of sites with results of research. There are also agencies that focus clinical research studies such as like the Agency for Health Research and Quality (AHRQ). They are helping to create a national telehealth nursing research agenda. It will be essential that these projects are reviewed so that Connecticut does not develop pilots that have already been researched and have shown quality outcomes.

This bill potentially affects major areas that are being addressed in this session. Innovative ways to deal with health care shortages – effective high quality care based on research – decreased recidivism of patients likely to use the emergency room, which increases access for others -- *and* the potential to protect the public which we serve.

Thank you for this opportunity to present and we strongly urge members of the committee to act favorably on this bill.