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TESTIMONY
COMMITTEE BILL No. 683 – AN ACT CONCERNING EARLY CHILDHOOD
LEAD POISONING

Public Health Committee
Public Hearing - March 14, 2007

TO: Senator Handley, Representative Sayers and members of the Committee of Public Health.

Thank you for allowing me to offer testimony today on Committee Bill 683 – An Act Concerning Early Childhood Lead Poisoning. My name is Joan Cagginello and I have been a registered nurse in Connecticut for 30 years. I have worked in school health services and public health for the past 15 years. I am currently the president of the Association of School Nurses of CT (ASNC), the professional organization for school nurses in Connecticut. School nurses are health care providers for children and often are the front line providers for children with barriers to healthcare such as lack of access to providers or being under- or uninsured. It is a privilege to offer insight regarding lead poisoning in children.

The Association of School Nurses of Connecticut supports legislation for the early identification of children with lead poisoning. We believe that a comprehensive lead program that includes mandated screening for all children periodically through 36 months of age, a lowering of the current action levels for blood lead levels and the provision for necessary environmental remediation is necessary. Additional testing and follow-up is indicated for special needs children older than 36 months, as they may ingest soil or paint chips containing lead. ASNC views this bill as a beginning to the development of a comprehensive lead program.

Lead poisoning is a serious health condition that affects many young children by damaging their developing nervous systems and potentially affecting their kidney

function (renal function) and blood (hematologic system). Long-term effects of lead poisoning include developmental delays, lowered IQ scores, speech and language problems, visual-motor problems, learning disabilities and a generalized lowering of academic success. Behavioral effects include aggression, hyperactivity, and impulsivity among others. These serious effects from lead poisoning are completely preventable with adherence to guidelines for screening, evaluation and rapid intervention.

It is important to remember that there is no safe level of lead in the blood, where no harmful effects can occur. It is therefore imperative that this issue is addressed now and is addressed comprehensively. The Association of School Nurses of Connecticut supports the objective of this bill, *To take steps to eradicate early childhood lead poisoning and to minimize adverse effects on early childhood development*, however we strongly advise that the bill include measures to address screening, lowering of action levels and environmental remediation as well.

Thank you for your time and for taking an interest in this important issue. Please contact us for any questions that you may have.