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Testimony in favor of Bill No. 7161: An Act Revising the Definition of Advanced Nursing Practice.

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

Thank you all for the opportunity to present testimony on Proposed Bill 7161.

My name is Patricia McClure. I am a licensed APRN credentialed both as an adult nurse practitioner and an adult psychiatric and mental health nurse practitioner.

I work as a Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner in New London County and have been practicing in the mental health field for the past 15 years. Unfortunately, my ability to practice to the full extent of my education, certification and licensure is severely limited because I have been unable to find a psychiatrist willing to enter into a collaborative agreement.

Efforts on my part to obtain collaboration have been discouraging. One psychiatrist was particularly insulting and humiliating as to my credentials and my ability. The terms of the business arrangement that he was willing to consider would have required his seeing all of my patients which would have made it impossible for me to sustain a prescribing practice. The fees that he was suggesting and the amount of time that he would have required for supervision made any consideration of that collaboration prohibitive as well.

This was the extreme of course and other psychiatrists I contacted were much more cordial. However, none would agree to collaborate due to the added risk of exposure and the malpractice liability they believed they could incur through collaboration. Some stated they were concerned their malpractice premiums would increase.

In the New London County area, we recently lost two very competent Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners to untimely deaths. It is my understanding they had approximately 1000 patients between them. Many of their patients called my office requesting medication management. I had to turn them away because under the current state statute I do not meet the mandatory collaboration requirements. I later found out that some of these patients had to travel as far as Hartford to find a provider to manage their psychotropic medications. In addition, I had to turn down other mental health care providers in the area that called requesting medication management for their patients who had previously been treated by the two Nurse Practitioners who died.

The new language proposed in Bill # 7161 will continue to allow psychiatric APRNs to collaborate according to their education, standards of practice, and licensure. It will remove the tremendous difficulties imposed on APRN practice and alleviate the concerns of physicians who are struggling with decisions about helping an APRN who must request and secure a contractual agreement in order to practice to the full extent of her/his certification and licensure. My colleagues and I collaborate with other health professionals including physicians daily in professional life. Nothing about this proposed change in language will affect the way we practice.

Collaboration is a standard of professional APRN practice. Removing mandatory collaboration will provide patients with greater access to APRNs who provide professional, high quality, available health care and could relieve physicians concerns about liability. It may even encourage greater physician collaboration with APRNs.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope you will support this bill.