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**TESTIMONY RE: RAISED BILL NO. 5812, AN ACT CONCERNING THE  
AVAILABILITY OF AUTOMATIC EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATORS FOR  
PUBLIC USE**

**Public Health Committee Hearing**  
March 10, 2008

Good afternoon, 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) and for raising the issue of Automated External Defibrillators in public places. I am Maureen Worley, a registered nurse for almost 30 years and a member of CNA. I am the Clinical Supervisor in the Cardiac Catheterization Lab at University of Connecticut Health Center and was recently named the 2007 Connecticut State Nurse of the Year. I am speaking in favor of Raised Bill 5812 An Act Concerning the Availability of Automatic External Defibrillators for Public Use.

I received the Nurse of the Year award in large part due to my response to an incident that happened at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison. In July 2006 I was at the beach and noticed a commotion on the boardwalk and a man lying on the ground. I went to see if I could be of assistance and quickly recognized the severity of the situation as I assessed the man and found no pulse. After only minutes, the man was near death and I began to administer CPR in an attempt to save his life. I asked the lifeguards for an automated external defibrillator (AED) and was told that there was no such device at the State Beach. It took nearly fifteen minutes before any medical personnel arrived at the scene, and the first officer to arrive still did not have an AED device. Had I not performed CPR on this man until help arrived, he would have died on the boardwalk. Fortunately he did not become one of the 335,000 Americans that die every year from sudden cardiac arrest. He was able to receive life saving treatment and survived because a skilled cardiac nurse was on the scene within seconds. However, if I had not been there the outcome could have been different since most people in the general public

have a limited knowledge of CPR and may not be able to provide it effectively or for an extended period of time.

### **Cardiac Arrest Information**

- Approximately 95% of Americans who suffer cardiac arrest die before every reaching the hospital because effective CPR or defibrillators are unavailable. Many of these people would be alive if someone had provided immediate CPR and an AED.
- The shorter the time from collapse to treatment, the better the chances of survival.
  - For every one minute delay in defibrillation, the survival rate of a cardiac arrest victim decreases by 7 to 10%.
  - After more than 12 minutes of ventricular fibrillation, the survival rate of adults is less than 5%. Arrhythmias, or abnormal heart rhythms such as ventricular fibrillation, cause most sudden cardiac arrests.
  - Early defibrillation is the intervention that is most likely to improve survival rates.
- While CPR helps to maintain circulation and ventilation in a victim of cardiac arrest for a short period of time, it is unlikely to convert ventricular fibrillation to a normal heart rhythm.
- Restoring a normal heart rhythm requires defibrillation be provided within a few minutes of the arrest.
- **If an AED is immediately applied to a victim of cardiac arrest due to ventricular fibrillation, the likelihood of survival is high.** However, without such life-saving equipment in close proximity, the results can be dire. Such was the case of a 14 year old boy in Norwich who had an arrhythmia and died during a cross country meet. Even though CPR was performed and maintained effective circulation, he needed an AED to restart his heart. Unfortunately, by the time such a device arrived, it was too late.

This bill is an important first step for preventing such tragedies and for getting life-saving AEDs into public places across Connecticut. While this bill is full of promise for our state, we would recommend that it include all towns, not just the heart safe communities, and that the entities housing the devices would be included in the Good Samaritan Act.

This would allow locations such as Hammonasset State Beach to have AEDs on hand for the thousands of visitors they receive each day.

We urge the committee's support of this bill and consider the proposed modifications. AEDs have proven to be an effective means to save lives and no resident of our state, including the man at the beach or the boy in Norwich, should die due to a lack of vital equipment. This bill would increase the safety and protection of all Connecticut residents and would literally be a life saver.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.