

Testimony of Dr. Nancy B. Cabelus
Forensic nurse, educator, international forensic consultant
Belleair, Florida & Newington, Connecticut

Raised Bill 243, An Act Requiring Acute Care Hospitals to Make Forensic Nursing Services
Available to Patients

Committee on Public Health
Senator Handley and Representative Sayers, Co-Chairs
Members of the Public Health Committee

Honorable Chairs and Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Raised Bill 243, an act to make forensic services available to patients in acute care hospitals. I am a member of the Board of Directors of the International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN) and a former President of the CT Chapter of IAFN. I am also a retired CT State Trooper.

I support the intent of this bill to make forensic nursing services available to patients, especially those who are victims of trauma and crime. Forensic nursing care means the treatment provided by a forensic nurse who is trained and qualified to assess and identify types of injury, document and collect forensic evidence, gather facts about the circumstances patient's case, and provide a continuum of nursing care to include prevention of further injury and/or harm, professional referral, and follow up care. Forensic nurses could also testify in court as expert witnesses in certain situations. RB 243 would provide patients with appropriate services that could also assist Connecticut courts with fair and successful outcomes for cases involving crime victims.

I would like to remind Committee members that not all *forensic nurses* are trained as sexual assault nurse examiners. The role of a sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE) or a sexual assault forensic examiner (SAFE) would include the duties described above but is specialized in the care and treatment of victims of rape and sexual abuse. A SANE/SAFE coalition has been created in CT in effort to initiate a state funded, rapid response, SANE/SAFE program. The proposed SANE/SAFE program would be a partnership with hospitals where forensic services would be provided to adolescent and adult sexual assault patients. This type of program is much needed and long over due. More importantly, it would improve the overall quality of care and medico-legal response to sexual assault cases in CT.

While I strongly support Bill 243, I also support the effort made the SANE/SAFE coalition and believe the language of Bill 243 encompass a state funded, rapid response, SANE/SAFE program.

Thank you for your thoughtful and careful consideration of Bill 243.