



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Testimony by the Connecticut Department of Higher Education
Submitted by Jane Ciarleglio
Before the Public Health Committee
10:00 a.m. – LOB 1D
February 29, 2008

S.B. 246 (Raised) An Act Establishing a Loan Forgiveness Program for Historically Underrepresented Students Pursuing Careers in Nursing

In the FY 2007-09 budget \$250,000 was put in the Department of Public Health's budget for a two year pilot program to accomplish the goal of this bill in a slightly different way. The Department of Higher Education and the Department of Public Health along with guidance from the leadership of Appropriations Committee designed the following program, in part because no bill passed last year, to ensure the dollars were spent appropriately.

The need to encourage more minority group members to pursue careers in nursing is well-evidenced. As such, a Minority Nursing Grant Program has been established under the direction of the Department of Public Health which will begin on July 1, 2008. We feel this program will provide the needed financial encouragement for minority students to become nurses. Under this program, Pell Grant eligible minority students who are enrolled in the Community College nursing program may receive grant money to assist with the payment of their academic costs.

The complexity of running a loan program and additional debt burden placed on the students is less advisable than a grant program. We have found that direct student grant programs are an effective and efficient method for assisting needy students pay for college. We would strongly suggest that new language reflecting this program be substituted for the current language. We would be more than happy to provide that language to you if you desire.