CONNECTICUT
HOSPITAL
ASSOCIATION

TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
Wednesday, February 11, 2009

HB 6361, An Act Concerning The Establishment Of A Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners Program

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **HB 6361, An Act Concerning The Establishment Of A Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners Program.** For the past year, CHA has been working collaboratively with the Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc. (CONNSACS) and the Connecticut College of Emergency Room Physicians (CCEP) and other organizations to increase the use and availability of forensic nurses and create a program as envisioned in HB 6361.

HB 6361 establishes a Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners Advisory Committee which shall advise the Office of Victim Services on the establishment and implementation of a sexual assault forensic examiners program. Under HB 6361 a sexual assault forensic examiners program shall make available examiners who may provide immediate care and treatment to a victim of sexual assault who is a patient in an acute care hospital and may collect evidence pertaining to the investigation of any sexual assault in accordance with the State of Connecticut Technical Guidelines for Health Care Response to Victims of Sexual Assault, published by the Commission on the Standardization of the Collection of Evidence in Sexual Assault Investigations. Services provided by a sexual assault forensic examiner shall be: (1) in accordance with the hospital's policies and accreditation standards; and (2) pursuant to a written agreement entered into by the hospital, the Department of Public Health, and the Office of Victim Services.

CHA supports HB 6361 as it would increase the availability and use of nurses trained in forensic science to assess and treat victims of sexual assault to collect and document evidence. Sexual assault forensic examiners are specially trained to assess and treat victims of sexual assaults, as well as to collect and document evidence that will aid law enforcement authorities in finding and prosecuting the perpetrators of such crimes. Nurses and other emergency personnel trained in forensic science perform a critical service for crime victims, for the healthcare delivery system as a whole, which, due to shortages of nurses and other healthcare professionals, is constantly balancing the allocation of resources to provide proper assistance to persons in emergency situations, and for the state, which has a crucial interest in preserving evidence to assist in apprehending and prosecuting perpetrators.

CHA urges the Committee to support **HB 6361, An Act Concerning The Establishment Of A Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners Program.**

Thank you for your consideration of our position.

For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.