

STATEMENT

OF

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INITIATIVES & PROGRAMS

CAPITAL WORKFORCE PARTNERS

ON BEHALF OF THE

CAREER LADDER LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

BEFORE THE

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

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TESTIMONY OF MARIE M. SPIVEY
CAREER LADDER LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT

Introduction

Good evening Senator Harp and Representative Geragosian and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Marie Spivey. I am the Administrator of Allied Health/Nursing Initiatives and Programs at Capital Workforce Partners. I am also a registered nurse and expect to complete my doctorate degree on April 10th in Educational Leadership from the University of Hartford. Before I continue, I would like to say that we appreciate the work you have done and will continue to do on behalf of the residents in the state of Connecticut during this economic tsunami.

I am pleased to submit testimony on behalf of one initiative in particular that you have so generously sponsored through the Public Act 03-142, An Act Concerning Career Ladder programs back in June 2003.

As a pilot program, launched in January, 2005, it was designed to a) provide a 'bridge' for under-prepared certified nursing assistants (CNAs) to better prepare them for continued study in a more advanced nursing or allied health field, and b) to begin the process of building the academic and personal support skills of these individuals with the expectation that we could eventually penetrate the growing vacancy rates in the healthcare profession. The pilot was guided by an inter-organizational partnership comprised of Capital Workforce Partners (CWP), Capital Region Education Council (CREC), the 1199 Training and Upgrading Fund and Capital Community College. Twenty five of twenty-eight students selected entered the first pilot cohort in January 2005, at Capital Community College. Twenty-three individuals managed to arrange their work and family schedules to attend 4 hours of classes twice a week in order to complete the 60-weeks program. Most of these students worked 2, 3, or 4 jobs to make ends meet. One even worked 5 part-time jobs.

Intensive case management has enabled the students to expand their interests and possible career advancement in health care careers. Students need assistance in managing school, work and family obligations. The case manager worked with the students to provide counseling, direction and tracking and continued for an additional year once students have completed the pilot. The Annie E. Casey Foundation provided additional tuition support for the first and second cohorts. Three cohorts have completed the Bridges to Healthcare Careers program, and 75-80% of them are either in credit-bearing coursework, repeating a class for better preparation toward more advanced classes, or have actually completed programs yielding advanced licensure.

In addition, given your support, you have enabled Capital Workforce Partners to expand this work with additional partners to acquire funding from the US Department of Labor, and a *Jobs for Careers* grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to better educate certified nursing assistants and other entry level workers at the workplace. Partnerships have expanded to include 10 long-term care facilities, and will soon begin added work with 2-3 hospitals in the north central region of the state.

I would like to share one story with you in order for you to appreciate your contribution to the life of one of the students who entered the Bridges program.

Silvia worked in a nursing home as a Certified Nursing Assistant for 15 years, and enrolled in a Capital Region Education Council /1199 Training and Upgrading Fund (CREC/1199) external degree program in 2004. Her attendance was sporadic, but her obligations to her family were not. Silvia is a mother of two children; her daughter has cerebral palsy and is wheelchair bound. With minimal family support, Silvia lived paycheck to paycheck and although she wanted to complete the diploma program, she couldn't attend regularly. "I feel like I'm drowning, and I can't do school right now."

The program's case manager diligently built a trusting relationship with Silvia which allowed Silvia to feel comfortable talking about her inability to focus on school because of the difficulties in her daily life and her low self-esteem. Her case manager worked with her to develop an educational plan and measure her achievements along the way. Silvia's case manager stayed in contact with her consistently, checking in by telephone and encouraging her to take the small but important steps towards getting her diploma. Silvia's case manager also met with her teacher weekly to arrange for assignments that could be completed at home, and went to Silvia's home and workplace to deliver assignments. Additionally, the case manager helped Silvia to apply for resources available through the Department of Social Services and the Connecticut Cerebral Palsy Association, and continued to use motivational techniques to support Silvia in her education.

Silvia completed her high school diploma in 2005 and was accepted into the *Bridges to Health Care Careers* program at Capital Community College in 2006. She successfully completed the program with the assistance of another skilled case manager who helped her to develop and follow through with a college success/career plan. In 2007, Silvia was accepted into an Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) program, graduated, passed the licensing exam, and is currently a practicing nurse.

Your efforts have certainly given many individuals an opportunity to gain upward mobility in the healthcare field. Your efforts and your consideration to provide support for these expensive but significant programs in the future whenever possible once again, will be much appreciated. The issue here is that we are now providing support to these under-prepared adult learners now who for whatever reason were unable to access the educational skills needed as they were maturing.

So thank you once again, and with these remarks I conclude my testimony.

