CONNECTICUT
HOSPITAL
ASSOCIATION

TESTIMONY OF
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CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
BEFORE THE
HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE
Thursday, February 19, 2009

HB 5613, An Act Concerning The Establishment Of A Task Force That Shall Study Ways To Increase The Number Of Nursing Educators In The State

HB 6336, An Act Concerning Nurses Pursuing Advanced Degrees

Good afternoon Senator Handley, Representative Willis, and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. I am Liz Beaudin, Director of Nursing and Workforce Initiatives for the Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) and I appreciate the opportunity to testify on behalf of CHA and its members in support of **HB 5613, An Act Concerning The Establishment Of A Task Force That Shall Study Ways To Increase the Number of Nurse Educators In The State**, and **HB 6336, An Act Concerning Nurses Pursuing Advanced Degrees.**

It is essential that Connecticut pay careful attention to the development and supply of nursing faculty to avert a severe nursing shortage and the consequences it will have on the state's healthcare system. The shortage of nursing faculty has been identified as a key barrier to adequately preparing the nursing workforce critically needed within the next decade. Connecticut is projected to have one of the worst nursing shortages in the nation due to a demographic phenomenon that places the state in a particularly vulnerable position. As the state with the eighth oldest population, Connecticut's demand for healthcare is high and expected to balloon as the baby boomer generation ages. Among the baby boomers retiring over the next decade will be nurses whose average age is in the late forties, and nursing educators, whose average age is generally higher.

According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, large numbers of qualified applicants continue to be turned away from schools of nursing due to faculty shortages. Over 27,000 were turned away from baccalaureate programs in 2008 alone. For the years 2004 and 2005, the Connecticut League for Nursing reported that 2000 qualified applicants were turned away from nursing programs in Connecticut because of lack of faculty. The National League for Nursing cites additional concerning trends including the expected retirement of two thirds of the full-time nursing faculty workforce between the years 2011 and 2021, an increasing proportion of faculty members working part-time, and a decline in faculty members with higher degrees.

Increasing the nursing faculty pipeline is a complex, multifaceted process. We encourage you to include in the charge to the Task Force that it consider:

- An assessment and analysis of the current nursing faculty in Connecticut, including such information as age, educational level, full time, part time and adjunct status, intent to retire/leave faculty positions, and nursing school projected needs.
- Exploration of nursing faculty salary and market issues.
- Development of a compilation of Connecticut's and other states' approaches and initiatives to address nursing faculty shortages to date.
- Tuition waivers and relief.
- Scholarship and scholarship for service programs.
- Loan programs.

Additionally, we suggest that members of the Task Force include representation from:

- University of Connecticut, Connecticut State University System, Connecticut Community College System, and Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges Nursing faculty.
- Departments of Labor, Public Health, and Higher Education.
- Hospitals, long-term care, and home care nursing services.
- Nursing students from different degree level programs.
- Connecticut Hospital Association, Connecticut Nurses' Association, Connecticut League for Nursing, and Organization of Nurse Executives of Connecticut.

HB 6336, An Act Concerning Nurses Pursuing Advanced Degrees would require the Department of Higher Education to conduct a study of issues related to nurses pursuing advanced degrees and to report findings to the Legislature no later than January 1, 2010. CHA supports this bill and proposed study as it will inform the work of the Task Force established by enactment of **HB 5613.**

We would like to thank you, Senator Handley and Representative Willis, for keeping focus on this critical issue and we look forward to working with you.

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