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Susan Bysiewicz
SECRETARY OF THE STATE
CONNECTICUT

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF PROPOSED HOUSE BILL 5906
*An Act Concerning Veterans' Benefits for Members of the
United States Cadet Nurse Corps*

Distinguished Co-Chairs—Senator Maynard and State Representative Graziani—and other members of the Select Committee on Veterans' Affairs in the General Assembly:

I am very pleased to write to you today in support of Proposed Bill 5906 - *An Act Concerning Veterans' Benefits for Members of the United States Cadet Nurse Corps*.

With the signing of the Ledbetter Fair Pay Act by President Barack Obama last week, our country has moved a step closer to addressing the inequities that still exist in the treatment of women in our country.

Proposed bill 5906 affords many of the women who have served our country at time of war the same rights given to others so much deserving of those rights.

This proposed bill would provide for a former member of the United States Cadet Nurse Corps to be eligible for the same benefits as any veteran of the armed forces of the United States.

As you know, the United States Cadet Nurse Corps was a program established by the Federal government in 1943 with the primary purpose of ensuring that the United States had enough nurses to care for the needs of its citizens on both the home and war fronts.

This program contributed to a dramatic rise in the number of nursing students, a greater public recognition of nurses, and changes in the manner in which nurses were educated and trained.

With many women becoming employed in war-related factories, and more and more doctors and nurses joining the war effort, the need to recruit and train more nurses became more pressing by 1943.

With the passing of the Bolton Act of 1943, the United States Cadet Nurse Corps offered an innovative solution to the pressing shortage of nurses at the start of World War II. It offered tuition and other financial incentives and a quick way to train a corps of nurses who would temporarily free graduate nurses for military service.

The Cadet Nurses comprised the largest, youngest group of uniformed women to serve our country during the war and the immediate postwar years--as many as 124,000 serving between 1943 and 1948.

Between 1943 and 1948, about 15 percent of them were assigned to U.S. Army and Navy hospitals, marine hospitals, other federal hospitals, and Veterans Administration centers and facilities to care for wounded and returning soldiers. About 80 percent were assigned to non-federal hospitals, but many of them still met the needs of returning veterans.

Those women who served our country as war-time Cadet Nurses deserve recognition for their commitment and service at a most critical time in our nation's history. The women of the United States Cadet Nurse Corps are veterans.

On August 3rd, 2007 Representative Nita Lowey of NY introduced HR Bill 3423 in the U.S. House of Representatives to grant participants in the Cadet Nurse Corps full veteran status for purposes of laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

This status is justified given the fact that Cadet Nurses were enlisted in uniformed, military service in a time of war, under the command of the United States Public Health Service and the Surgeon General of the United States.

Since HR 3423 did not pass in the U.S. Congress, the Connecticut General Assembly has a unique opportunity to send a strong message to the federal government and to these women that their service to our country has not been taken for granted.

Last year I recognized World War II veterans throughout the state for their ultimate public service and sacrifice for our country. I am deeply committed to recognizing the efforts and contributions of the U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps who in many cases served right alongside other women in uniform such as the Army and Navy Nurse Corps and the Women Air Force Service Pilots (WASP) and male soldiers in the European and Pacific theaters.

In recognition of their important role during the World War II campaigns and the immediate post-war years, I urge you to adopt Proposed Bill 5906 in this session of the General Assembly.

This bill would extend veterans' benefits to members of the United States Cadet Nurse Corps and send a strong message to our U.S. Congress.

Thank you!

Respectfully submitted,

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