CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
Friday, March 12, 2010

SB 401, An Act Concerning An Initiative To Increase And Improve The State's Health Care Workforce

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **SB 401, An Act Concerning An Initiative To Increase And Improve The State's Health Care Workforce.**

SB 401 calls for the collaboration of the Department of Public Health, the Department of Higher Education, the Labor Department, the Office of Workforce Competitiveness, The University of Connecticut, The University of Connecticut School of Medicine, The University of Connecticut School of Dentistry, the Connecticut State University System, and the regional community-technical college system to develop an initiative to address the state's healthcare workforce shortage. The initiative must seek to increase the number of healthcare workers in the state through the offering of expanded and enhanced educational programs at public institutions of higher education and include elements that: Expand existing programs to promote increased enrollment and retain students; develop programs designed to assimilate displaced workers and individuals seeking career change into the healthcare workforce; recruit and retain healthcare workers from underserved populations; establish collaborative relationships between healthcare professions that are assistive to efforts to improve access to healthcare; and develop distance-learning and on-the-job training initiatives.

It is important that Connecticut continue to be vigilant with regard to the growing and projected shortage of healthcare workers within the state. As the state with the nation's ninth oldest population, Connecticut's demand for healthcare is high and is expected to increase substantially as the baby boomer generation ages. If not adequately addressed, the shortage created by large numbers of baby boomers retiring from the healthcare workforce may lead to a serious crisis in care for Connecticut's citizens.

SB 401 keeps the healthcare workforce shortage as a visible issue on the state's agenda, builds on work that has been carried out by state agencies, public educational institutions, and others as facilitated and captured by the Allied Health Workforce Policy Board in its annual reports, and articulates some enhanced partnerships and new areas for consideration.

The Allied Health Workforce Policy Board's Annual Legislative Report (January 2010) describes myriad initiatives that include improved career pathway articulations, expanded educational programs and increased enrollment, student assistance and retention, incumbent worker training, scholarship awards, programming in urban areas, healthcare career programs and advisement for students from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds, and distance learning coursework. A fair number of these initiatives might be described as pilot programs that can serve as good sources for consideration for use on a statewide basis. The Allied Health Workforce Policy Board is not charged with consideration of shortages of physicians and dentists or to specifically address healthcare relationships and improving access to care, but clearly these are important areas that require attention.

CHA welcomes the continued focus that SB 401 brings to the critical issue of healthcare workforce shortages. We recommend that, as appropriate, the collaborative identified in the bill draw upon the work articulated by the Allied Healthcare Workforce Policy Board and support the elements of the initiative as provided for in SB 401.

Thank you for your consideration of our position.

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