



Saint Raphael Healthcare System

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Saint Raphael Healthcare System
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Good morning Senator Handley, Representative Willis and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 5024, "An Act Concerning and Educational Doctoral Degree Program in Nursing Education" which would allow the Connecticut State University System (CSUS) to offer an Ed.D. degree in nursing education. For the record, I am Christopher O'Connor, Chief Executive Office of the Hospital of St. Raphael. I strongly support Connecticut State University System's (CSUS) proposed Ed.D. in Nursing Education that would be offered collaboratively by Southern Connecticut State University and Western Connecticut State University.

St. Raphael's is a 511-bed hospital in New Haven. As a community teaching hospital affiliated with Yale University School of Medicine, it is renowned for excellence in patient care and medical education. Consistent with our mission to improve the health of our patients with a special focus on the underserved, poor and elderly, we offer a variety of on-site and community-based outreach programs to address the health needs of patients across a continuum of care.

The quality of nursing care at the Hospital of Saint Raphael is the best manifestation of its mission -- grounded in the principles of dignity, charity, and justice, and propelled by the commitment to serve all people. Combining a tradition of compassionate care for over one hundred years with the very latest in technology, our nurses deliver a standard of care that is unmatched.

The current and projected shortage of registered nurses, which is expected to be especially severe in Connecticut, must be addressed so that the excellent patient care provided at St. Raphael's, and other Connecticut hospitals, is not compromised. Although nursing programs in Connecticut have done their part by expanding enrollment over the past several years, further expansion is not an option without an increase in the number of qualified faculty to teach a new generation of nurses.

Data from national nursing organizations, such as the National League for Nursing and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, indicate that the nurse faculty shortage may be even more severe than that of the registered nurse shortage. Thus, it is critical that we prepare more nurses to assume faculty positions.

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The proposed Ed.D. in Nursing Education from the CSUS offers an innovative solution that will help to address both the registered nurse and nurse faculty shortages. The CSUS proposal provides a comprehensive and long term strategy to address this significant issue by maximizing existing resources of two of its universities and preparing faculty who be able to teach in entry level and graduate nursing education programs. This is a critical requirement to ensure that there is a continuous supply of nursing professionals who can assume entry level practice positions and advanced education roles.

I urge you to give full support for this important initiative and thank you for your leadership in addressing the State's nursing workforce needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christopher M. O'Connor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "C" and "O".

Christopher M. O'Connor, FACHE
President and Chief Executive Officer
Saint Raphael Healthcare System