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President

Higher Education Committee

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Good Morning Senator Handley, Representative Willis, and members of the Higher Education Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to address the Committee on the proposal that was presented to you last week concerning the University of CT Health Center.

I am Jean Morningstar, the President of University Health Professionals (UHP), the professional non faculty union at UHC. UHP has over 2400 members, and is the largest union of employees at the University. Our members are dedicated professionals who work in public service and value the public University and Health Center that they serve. An example of their dedication is witnessed when you understand that we were the ONLY union that did not get non layoff language in the SEBAC negotiations last year with the Governor. Instead of no layoff language, my members sacrificed that so that the fringe benefits that they receive, that are no different than the other 48,000 State employees, could be financed by the Comptroller's Office, rather than their own agency, the UHC. UHP agreed to this so that the State's only public hospital could remain viable and could continue to function at the high level that the State's citizens expect. They also did this knowing that people would be laid off; and they have been!

We want to thank those of you in here, and in the rest of the legislature, who heard our concerns and worked tirelessly to try and craft a solution to the historic issues surrounding the regions issues with healthcare. We were part of the listening tour that the Board of Trustees embarked upon last year, and are happy that they heard us and addressed many of our concerns in their proposal that you received last week. Like you, we are VERY disappointed that we were not brought to the table to help craft the proposal.

As to the proposal, UHP is extremely cautious in being optimistic. Without details, and without being privy to the discussions that led to this proposal, it is impossible to be anything but cautious. The optimism comes from the fact that what we heard on Thursday of last week keeps the UHC as a public hospital with its own governance and the status of the employees as State employees with a public mission that we have fought hard to keep intact. The intended elevation of the medical and dental school is a goal that we wholeheartedly support and wish to help succeed.

Unfortunately, the plan for the NNICU is one that we are intensely wary of and cannot philosophically support. The transfer, under a CON, of the 40 NNICU beds to CCMC gives that entity a virtual monopoly of the NNICU beds in the area. CCMC makes no secret of the fact that they wish to control the beds in Hartford (including St. Francis), now Farmington, Waterbury (including St. Mary's), and Shriners in Springfield. Danbury Hospital has told them "no"; but plans to give them their pediatric services. New Milford is closing their beds April 1, and CCMC will have those too. What this means is that CCMC will

control the insurance rates and, as we saw in Massachusetts, that drove the rate up for the consumer. This is simply bad public policy and not one that I think is good for the state of CT. We virtually will have 2 entities, CCMC and Yale, controlling all the NNICU beds in the state.

On top of that, we will be giving control of these 40 beds to CCMC before we have a guarantee that we will get a CON approved for the 45 beds that the plan touts. What happens if the CON to change the 40 NNICU beds to Med Surg beds doesn't get approved? Even if the new CON is approved, the new tower will not be built for several years IF the funding gets approved. That means that we don't have those beds in place and no revenue will be forthcoming on those beds for years to come.

That being said, I would like to say that the new Board Chairperson, Larry McHugh, has made a concerted effort to reach out to the labor unions, and I would like to publicly acknowledge that he and Dr. Laurencin have made great strides in their communication with us. We may not always agree, but they are willing to have the conversation with us. That certainly is a new approach that we wholeheartedly respect and approve.

Thank you for this opportunity to address you; and know that we are more than willing to help to reach a successful, sustainable solution.