



February 9, 2010

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 an Education Doctoral Degree Program in Nursing Education" which would allow the Connecticut State University System (CSUS) to offer an Ed.D. in nursing education. For the record, I am Dr. Cesarina Thompson from Southern Connecticut State University, Aide to the Dean, School of Graduate Studies, Professor of Nursing and former Chairperson of the Department of Nursing.

As was mentioned by my colleague, Dr. Rinker, this proposed program, that would be offered collaboratively by two CSUS institutions – Southern and Western – is uniquely designed to prepare nurses for the faculty role. The program would significantly impact the critical nurse faculty shortage as well as the nursing shortage. Despite the shortage of RNs, which is predicted to reach about 22,000 in Connecticut by the year 2020, nursing programs in Connecticut have had to turn down a considerable number of applicants for the past several years due to lack of qualified faculty. The most recent admission data available, through a survey conducted by the Connecticut League for Nursing in 2007, indicates that about 1700 qualified applicants were denied admission across all RN programs because we do not have enough faculty to teach them. In addition, due to the predicted retirement of faculty over the next decade, this problem will only get worse unless more nurses are prepared to assume faculty roles.

In our collaborative proposal, the curriculum will be tailored to address the needs of students with varying degrees of teaching experience and will utilize non-traditional course delivery formats to accommodate the needs of learners from across Connecticut and the region. Findings from surveys sent to Deans, Directors, and Chairpersons of Connecticut nursing programs and to a sample of licensed RNs indicate that there is strong interest in this type of program. In fact, surveys have indicated a substantial number of RNs and master's prepared faculty would enroll in such a program. The intent is to admit a cohort of 25 students every other year into this three-year program with the goal of producing about 80 new nursing faculty over the next ten years. The first graduates of the program would be able to assume faculty positions as early as 2014. This would make a significant impact on our ability to meet the demand for nursing faculty. Over the next decade these additional faculty could then prepare an estimated 2,000 new nurses.

The proposed Ed.D. in Nursing Education would be the only one of its kind in Connecticut to specifically focus on preparing future nursing faculty. The program would include content in educational theories, curriculum development, evaluation, research in nursing education, and academic program leadership. In fact, key findings from recently published research on transforming nursing education emphasize the need to change nurse faculty preparation. Lead author, Dr. Patricia Benner, a nationally known nurse researcher points out that, "For the past 30 years faculty and administrators of graduate nursing programs have focused their attention on developing robust nursing research, ignoring the need to prepare new faculty to address the specific educational demands of teaching the complex practice of nursing." She asserts that a "central challenge to enhancing the quality of nursing education is the lack of focus on teaching and basic teacher preparation in graduate nursing schools."

Our proposed program is uniquely designed to prepare more nurses for the demanding role of nurse educator. It has received strong support from the community of professionals who prepare and hire nurses, including the Connecticut College Community System and its individual colleges that prepare nurses, the Connecticut Nurses' Association, the Connecticut League for Nursing and the National League for Nursing, and our practitioner colleagues in hospitals such as Yale-New Haven Hospital, Hospital of St. Raphael, Hartford Hospital, and Danbury Hospital.

This will build on the collaborative relationship that currently exists between Southern Connecticut State University and Western Connecticut State University in successfully educating nurses and preparing nurse educators. Southern and Western will share resources including faculty, technology, classroom space, etc. No new State dollars are required for this important initiative that will address the critical need for nurse faculty in both two and four year institutions. We recently received a federal appropriation of \$300,000 to support the development of this program. We also will be devoting institutional resources to support this program.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. We would be happy to answer any questions.