

State Vocational Federation of Teachers

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Testimony of Rebecca Sirowich, Former LPN Instructor State Vocational Federation of Teachers Labor and Public Employees Committee February 25, 2010

Re: Support for the States Vocational Licensed Practical Nursing Program and Opposition to suspension of the Licensed Practical Nursing Program

Dear Senator Prague, Representative Ryan, and Committee Members,

My name is Rebecca Sirowich. I was an instructor at Kaynor Technical High School in Waterbury and I am speaking on behalf of the Licensed Practical Nursing Program, which was recently "suspended" at the Technical High School System. In times when job creation is crucial, the ability for the state to provide educational means for the community is also imperative. The Licensed Practical Nursing Program was ideal and provided a professional career for many whom are part of our nursing workforce today.

In a time when job security is needed, this program provide a secure profession and a path to new opportunities. The licensed practical nursing program provided educational opportunities for a variety of people. One group of individuals that represents a majority of our students is single mothers. These women who have school age children attended our program during the daytime while their children attended school. They benefited from school vacations, snow days and the ability to be home to care for their family. The need to hire daycare or find someone to watch their children was reduced because of this schedule. This program provided opportunity for high school students enrolled in the health technology programs to pursue their career in nursing where they attended high school. As an alternative choice other than college, it was beneficial to stay within a safe setting with familiar teachers and a support system that some students would benefit from.

Colleges, Community Technical Colleges and Private Institutions are an overwhelming task for some. Classes that are only offered in the spring semester create an entire new challenge as many students struggle to get into a particular class. Lecture held in a huge auditorium is not personal, which is much different than this program. The vocational technical school system provided a very welcoming environment to many. Our teaching strategies follow those utilized by the

vocational technical school system. Our innovative teaching techniques also provided a different approach to learning, much different from college courses.

I understand that a newly proposed bill was introduced this legislative session to have the licensed practical nursing program at the community colleges. I strongly oppose this proposal as it will create different individuals from applying to our program. As it becomes more competitive to get accepted into a registered nursing program, the practical nursing program will attract those that have been not accepted into the RN program, those who are not truly interested in becoming a licensed practical nurse. Many of these individuals will not want to work inside a rehabilitation centers or skilled nursing facility, caring for people's elderly mother or father. Their goal is ultimately to become a registered nurse. The opportunity for those that really want to become a licensed practical nurse will only become more limited.

The necessity to provide the community with our Adult Education Programs is greater now than ever before. More professional practical nurses are going to be needed to care for our elderly population. At some point in all of our lives, we will know a person who needs rehabilitation in a skilled nursing facility, who will need a practical nurse caring for them at the bedside. We will need an LPN to care for our mother or your father when they are sick or suffering from a chronic disease. The decision to close the program in which most of the State's LPNs receive their training jeopardizes our most vulnerable citizens, our sick and our elderly. The LPN program should be immediately restored to the CT State Technical School System.

Thank you,

Rebecca Sirowich