



Written
Testimony

Submitted

By

Anne R. Bavier, PhD, RN, FAAN
Dean and Professor
School of Nursing

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Co-Chairs, Ranking Members and Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony today on H.B. 5888 under consideration by the Committee.

HB 5888 An Act Concerning College Credit for Transfer from a Licensed Practical Nurse Education Program into a Registered Nurse Education Program

I am the Dean of the School of Nursing at the University of Connecticut. Having spent most of my career in academia and currently serving as an elected board member of the National League for Nursing, I am quite familiar with the challenges of preparing a nursing workforce to meet the needs of the population.

As you are aware, the Institute of Medicine (2010) recently released its report on the *Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*. The report notes the need to improve the education of nurses and recognizes the expanding roles of nurses in the health care delivery system. It also notes the importance of nurses achieving higher levels of nursing education: "Education should include opportunities for seamless transition to higher degree programs—from licensed practical nurse (LPN)/licensed vocational nurse (LVN) diplomas: to the associate's (ADN) and bachelor's (BSN) degrees" I concur with these recommendations and strongly support individuals pursuing higher education to fulfill the many roles of the Registered Nurse and to advance their own careers.

In addition, there is legitimate concern about the numbers of Registered Nurses (RNs) in the State of Connecticut. According to the Federal Government's latest survey of Registered Nurses (2008), Connecticut had the lowest estimated full time equivalent RNs in New England [e.g.,

Connecticut had 842 per 100,000 population; Massachusetts had 991 per 100,000 population.] Additionally, 30.4% of the employed RNs in Connecticut had bachelor's degrees. I agree that Connecticut would benefit from more RNs in our workforce, especially those with a baccalaureate degree.

However, the wording of the proposed legislation poses some significant challenges. Connecticut has some good programs that qualify an individual for licensure as an LPN. In recent years, statewide efforts to assure strong programs have been important in strengthening the quality of the applicants and graduates. When individuals enroll in such programs, the emphasis is on technical skills backed up with some scientific information. Completion of this sequence does not produce an individual who is ready to enter the second year of a registered nursing education program. For example, admission into the UConn baccalaureate program requires completion of chemistry and physics at the high school level. Then, during the first year, baccalaureate students take courses in biology, chemistry, sociology and philosophy. Without these courses, transfers into the second year would not be able handle the required courses in genetics, human anatomy and physiology or clinical science (nutrition and pharmacology). Consequently, we cannot offer LPNs a seamless entry into the second year of our baccalaureate program in nursing.

It is important to note that there is an agreement approved by the Department of Higher Education (May 1992) for articulation from associate degree and diploma programs into baccalaureate programs. This model states the conditions and terms for a student to move seamlessly into programs of higher education. This works well. Using this model, UConn offers a RN to master's degree that provides for the sciences typical of an undergraduate degree in nursing, community practice experience, awarding of a baccalaureate degree and the courses and practical experience for awarding a master's of science degree (in nursing).

Therefore, I recommend to the Committee that the language of the proposed legislation be revised. It needs to state either what courses could be transferred, such as a fundamentals of nursing practice, or who is responsible for developing an articulation model for LPNs into RN programs. I would highly recommend that our colleagues in the LPN and associate degree programs be active participants, as the initial transfers of LPNs are likely to be into associate degree programs with subsequent transfers into baccalaureate programs.

I am pleased to assist in any manner. The health of the people of Connecticut is important and preparing RNs is a key component of that effort.