

Testimony

Senator Bye, Representative Willis and

Members of the committee

Thank you for allowing me to speak today. I am here today to speak in opposition to governor's Bill No 1011 An Act Concerning Reorganization of CSU System of Public Education in its current form.....

I am Dr. Karen Crouse, Chair of the Department of Nursing at Western Connecticut State University. I am also a member of AAUP .

I see no strategic plan for higher education at either the community college or CSU level but a hodgepodge of ideas with no direction. I see no philosophy, mission or vision for CT's higher education and how this would benefit the students, and improve educational outcomes but rather a backlash against the system offices.

I am proud of the relationship that we at Western have with the Southern CT State University nursing programs have as we seek a collaborative Ed.D. in Nursing Education (now held up in another CT bureaucracy). We have also worked tirelessly with our colleagues at Central CT to obtain almost a million dollars in grant funding for technology that can be shared among the 3 prelicensure programs.

While I agree that in the interest of cost savings and efficiency, streamlining services within the CSU system is a necessity and a reality, I caution the Committee on how to proceed. I present my concerns from a professional and academic nursing perspective. How nurses are educated has far reaching impact on patient safety and the overall health of the citizens on the State of Connecticut.

Linda Aiken (UPenn) landmark study supports the notion that baccalaureate prepared nurses contribute to better patient outcomes. National nursing leaders continue to support the bachelors degree as minimal entry to practice for nursing, and are calling for increased education of nurses at the advanced practice level. . These position statements with regard to nursing practice and level of education are empirically driven and taking hold nationally. CSU nursing departments recognized this challenge. We graduate the most baccalaureate educated nurses in the state of Connecticut. Our data support that the majority of our students stay in the State of Connecticut and care for its citizens. Employers in the state, striving for better, more improved patient outcomes, have listened to our national accreditors and nursing leaders, demanding more baccalaureate prepared nurses. CSU nursing departments and dedicated faculty are in sync with our thought leaders and stakeholders. We recognize the need to educate nursing students at the baccalaureate level, as well as provide a pipeline to graduate study. The demand nationally is for more educated nurses at the bedside. CSU nursing departments answer the call.

How nurses are educated in the community colleges and at the university level vary in curricular and practical approach. Our accreditors differ at the associate degree versus the baccalaureate and higher

level, each citing different outcomes and essential competencies given the level of education, although the associate degree RN and the baccalaureate RN sit for the same licensure exam. The good news is our articulation agreements with the community colleges. CSU programs have developed an articulation agreements with the Community colleges that supports Associate degree RNs transitioning seamlessly into RN to BS programs. We want the associate degree RN to attain a bachelors degree and we recognize the differing needs of each type of student. The RN to BS programs are growing and increasing in demand. The needs of the two types of undergraduate baccalaureate student are vastly different. CSU nursing faculty support the success of our prelicensure RNs and our RN to BS students. We have recognized the need of each type of student, and in doing so we contribute to the health of the citizens of the state of Connecticut. Our programs are successful and in demand. Our reputation throughout the state speaks for itself.

I would ask that your committee along with stakeholders develop a strategic plan for higher education in CT that in reality benefits the students.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Karen Crouse