



Testimony of
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HB 5048 An Act Requiring Certificate of Need Approval for the Termination of Inpatient and Outpatient Services by a Hospital

Public Health Committee
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Good afternoon Senator Stillman, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Lisa D'Abrosca and I have worked at Lawrence and Memorial Hospital in New London as a Registered Nurse for seven years. As well as being a nurse at the hospital, I have served on the executive committee of my union for five years, the last three of which I have held the title of union president. I represent approximately 500 members. I am here today to testify in favor of HB 5048 An Act Requiring Certificate of Need Approval for the Termination of Inpatient and Outpatient Services by a Hospital.

When Certificate of Need reform legislation was passed last session, it removed a provision that required hospitals to seek approval from the Office of Health Care Access before terminating a patient service. The topic of a certificate of need is a familiar one, and one that which strikes an emotional chord in not only the members of my union but the members of my community as well.

I can speak to this topic as I have had much experience with it in my tenure as a union officer and as an RN. I must start by saying that the re-institution of the certificate of need is the best thing that can happen to my hospital. When in place, I have seen it safeguard both the members of my union and the members of the community. When the application process for the certificate of need has been dissolved, I have witnessed the destruction it has caused.

Several years ago, the hospital administration attempted to close down the OB-GYN clinic. This clinic provided gynecological and obstetric care to the uninsured and underprivileged individuals in the community. It employed approximately 20 employees. Should the hospital have succeeded in its venture to close the clinic, hundreds of women and unborn children would have suffered greatly. Routine gynecological care can prevent a variety of problems, including cancers of different kinds. Mothers that do not receive prenatal care are five times more likely to have a fetal demise or a stillbirth. Aside from the impact of the health of individuals, the employees would suffer an impact as they would have been laid off.

Because of the certificate of need process, the hospital's intentions were revealed ahead of time and the proposed detrimental effects were exposed to the members of the community. Many members of the New London community, along with special interest groups testified on behalf of the patients. Both effected members and sympathetic members of the union came forward to speak on the behalf of the employees. Through the combined efforts, the clinic was saved and went on to serve its patients until just recently.

When the certificate of need process is not in place, it causes devastation. Because of the recent CON reform legislation, the hospital was able to achieve its goal and drastically cut the services provided by the OB-GYN clinic. Services that were previously provided such as routine screenings and routine gynecological care were eliminated and the total amount of patients seen by the clinic was cut in half. Several union members were laid off and several others had their hours cut so significantly, they are no longer eligible to receive health benefits. Had the CON program been in place at that time, it is doubtful that the hospital would have made such changes. Now the members of the community are lacking access to important healthcare, and the union members are left to pick up the pieces of their lives.

The passage of HB 5048 would prevent things like this from happening in the future. It will ensure that hospitals are acting in the best interest of the patients that they serve; not their pocketbooks. I implore you all to support this legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.