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TESTIMONY RE: Raised Bill H.B. No. 6305 AN ACT CONCERNING IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE SUSTINET PLAN

TO: Senator Stillman, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee; Senator Crisco and Representative Megna and members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee; Senator Musto and Representative Tercyak and members of the Human Services Committee.

Thank-you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Nurses' Association (CNA), the professional organization for registered nurses in Connecticut, on Raised Bill H.B. No. 6305 AN ACT CONCERNING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUSTINET PLAN. I am Mary Jane Williams, PhD., RN Chair of the Government Relations Committee for the Connecticut Nurses Association and Professor Emeritus Central Connecticut State University. I am presenting testimony in support of H.B. No.6305.

The Connecticut Nurses' Association is the professional nursing organization for the 53,000 registered nurses in the state. Nurses represent the largest group of health care providers. They practice in all health care settings, as primary providers of health and/or illness care services, as educators and researchers, as legislators and regulators, as consultants to business and industry and as the constant knowledgeable presence in disease prevention and care. Nurses have extensive experience providing care for people in all settings, at all levels of care across the continuum of life, with or without funding. Nurses understand the strain that the existing health care system, which

focuses on illness care has placed a financial burden on the existing payer system and has placed an added burden on the current human and clinical resources while it delivers care that is sometimes inadequate due to the financial burden on the individual and the system.

Providing health care to the uninsured and underinsured has been a policy issue for a number of years, as Connecticut, like sister states and the federal government, has grappled with the costs and planning for this care. We know that thousands of Connecticut's residents lack health care coverage, and many of these individuals are employed. Most cannot afford health care premiums and cannot qualify for public programs. Most wait to seek care, and when they do, they are sicker and cost more to treat. We've know that the uninsured are a piece of the overwhelming problems of the health care system requiring the attention of health professionals, policy makers and the public. We also have known that our system of care is expensive, often does not provide good outcomes and is based on illness rather than prevention.

The Sustinet Plan, will control health care costs, save Connecticut's families and businesses money, and make coverage available to everyone who needs it in the state. This proposed legislation offers many Connecticut resident high quality, affordable health care regardless of pre-existing conditions, job changes, self-employment, divorce and other life changes. This would include people without coverage, unaffordable coverage or inadequate health benefits provided through their employer.

The proposed legislation will provide a comprehensive package of benefits, including dental and mental health coverage, which would emphasize prevention. Individuals could choose their own doctors, and have the option of keeping their existing health plans and their premium payments would be based on a sliding scale depending on income.

With more than 320,000 Connecticut residents uninsured and a growing shortage of primary care providers, coupled with a growing aging population, increasing rates of chronic illness and the dwindling number primary providers this legislation is essential in the provision of preventive health care.

Therefore as nurses we want to make sure the following questions are addressed in all proposed legislation. Questions you should ask when considering this important legislation include:

- Is it a truly inclusive system where no one is left out?
- Does it improve people's access to health care?
- Does it reallocate resources and infrastructure to support primary care and prevention?
- Does it rely on evidence-based care and reward quality?
- Does it tackle disparities in health care quality and outcomes, especially among vulnerable populations?
- Is it affordable for working families? Does it protect families from financial ruin in cases where health care expenses are disproportionately large?
- Does it offer affordable and predictable costs to businesses and employers?
- Does it demand accountability, transparency and equity from the private health care marketplace?
- Does it invest in nursing?
- Does it open the door for RNs to optimize their skills, knowledge and abilities in all roles and settings to help patients?
- Does it facilitate the development of partnerships between practitioners' to optimize the delivery of care?
- Does it provide a coherent health care vision and strategy?
- Is it cost effective and affordable for the individual and for the state?

AND perhaps the most important for registered nurses—how will this affect my patients? (American Nurses Association, 2008)

Connecticut Nurses' Association looks forward to working collaboratively with other partners toward securing effective health care services, making decisions that positively impact funding in Connecticut, and engaging in dialogue that advances creative options for prevention, education, and appropriate access to health care services.

We thank you for this opportunity to present testimony and we urge you to adopt the best plan for the citizens of Connecticut.

Thank you

Mary Jane M. Williams PhD., RN