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TESTIMONY RE: **RB 5515 AN ACT CONCERNING PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS**

Public Health Committee
March 21, 2012

Good Morning Senator Gerrantana, Representative Ritter, and esteemed members of the Public Health 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. I am Dr. Mary Jane Williams, current chairperson of its Government Relations Committee and professor emeritus from Central Connecticut State University. I have practiced nursing for 48 years and have educated nurses in Connecticut in both the public and private sector for over 40 years.

I am speaking in opposition to **RB 5515 AN ACT CONCERNING PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS.**

Physician assistants (PAs) practice medicine under the supervision of physicians and surgeons. PAs are formally trained to provide diagnostic, therapeutic, and preventive healthcare services, as delegated by a physician. The Physician assistant works in a variety of settings, as determined by State regulations, under the direct supervision of a physician. The PA confers with the supervising physician and other medical professionals as needed. The duties and responsibilities of the physician assistant are determined and delegated by the supervising physician.

The Physician Assistant usually has a Bachelors' Degree and completes a two-year educational program in an institution of Higher learning. However, there are exceptions.

Physician assistant educational programs usually take at least 2 years to complete for full-time students. Educational settings vary from schools of allied health, academic health centers, medical schools, or 4-year colleges and a few are at community colleges. Some programs are part of the military, or are at hospitals offered a bachelor's degree, 3 awarded associate degrees, and 5 awarded a certificate. Their tends to be a great deal of variation related to experience prior to entering a program.

All States require physician assistants to complete an accredited, formal education program and pass a national exam to obtain a license, which guarantees **basic competence** on graduation.

It is our belief that the utilization of written protocols will limit the direct amount of supervision, and allow for an increase in the number of PA's requiring supervision. Although we agree some flexibility is necessary. The establishment of Protocols as described removes the supervising physician from the setting and may increase the numbers being supervised from a distance. The presence of the supervising Physician is essential to professional relationship, evaluation and ongoing development of the PA in the work environment. This proposed change in scope of practice makes the PA more autonomous in practice and changes the relationship of the PA to other health care providers as delineated in current scopes of practice.

Respectfully submitted

Mary Jane M. Williams