

Public Health Committee

Testimony prepared by Dr. Alice Pritchard

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RB 186 An Act Concerning the Licensing, Investigation and Disciplinary Process for Physicians and Nurses

Good morning. My name is Alice Pritchard and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF). CWEALF is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to empowering women, girls and their families to achieve equal opportunities in their personal and professional lives. I am testifying today on behalf of the Allied Health Workforce Policy Board on *RB 186 An Act Concerning the Licensing, Investigation and Disciplinary Process for Physicians and Nurses*.

The Connecticut Allied Health Workforce Policy Board (AHWPB) was established in Public Act 04-220 (*An Act Concerning Allied Health Workforce Needs*) to conduct research and planning activities related to the allied health workforce. The Board began meeting in March 2005 and issued its first report to the legislature in February 2006. Throughout its tenure, the Board has met regularly to discuss current initiatives in allied health in the state, gaps in workforce data, issues related to educational programming, and recruitment and retention of the workforce, as well as researching and developing solutions to allied health workforce shortages.

Through its deliberations, the AHWPB has identified a number of challenges that must be addressed in order to lessen workforce shortages in allied health and nursing. One key challenge is the lack of adequate data for forecasting our workforce shortages. The mandatory electronic licensing called for in RB 186 would provide important data in the state's efforts to ensure an adequately trained healthcare workforce.

In 2010, the Office for Workforce Competitiveness (OWC), secured a State Health Care Workforce Development Planning Grant to: 1) produce a statewide health care workforce plan including a short-term action plan and a statewide Health Care Workforce Scorecard; 2) Coordinate and streamline disparate health care workforce planning efforts and strengthen regional health care workforce planning processes; and 3) Identify opportunities to improve data collection and data sharing capacity – in support of the development of uniform data collection across States on licensed health professionals. The planning effort targeted the State of Connecticut with regional analysis and input organized through the State's five Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs). The planning process examined health care workforce areas related to primary care, allied health, and behavioral health.

Connecticut, through the Allied Health Workforce Policy Board, must develop a long-term plan for the allied health workforce, outlining the needs of employers over the next ten years and the current and predicted supply of skilled workers. The plan should identify the gap between demand and supply and the capacity of the state's colleges, universities, and other training providers to educate the needed workforce. In addition, the plan should outline how the barriers to career advancement outlined above will be addressed to ensure that state investments in training are efficient and effective. The data collected through online licensure is critical to this planning effort.

We urge your support of *RB 186 An Act Concerning the Licensing, Investigation and Disciplinary Process for Physicians and Nurses*.