

**TESTIMONY OF
EBONY FORAND, RN, BSN
ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGER
JOHNSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
BEFORE THE FINANCE, REVENUE & BONDING COMMITTEE
Thursday, March 13, 2014**

SB 368, An Act Phasing Out the Hospital Tax

My name is Ebony Forand, and I am a nursing supervisor at Johnson Memorial Hospital. Johnson Memorial Hospital supports the passage of **SB 368: An Act Phasing Out the Hospital Tax** as the phase out of this tax restores resources needed by hospitals to meet the medical needs of the patients we serve. Let me say right from the start that I love my job. I love caring for patients, and I want hospitals to have the resources they need to do that. I am an overnight nurse, and this is actually the middle of my night, but this cause is important and it's why I'm here.

If there's one thing I want you to take away from this testimony, it's that we nurses work hard every day. We're on our feet. We're working long hours. We don't do this to make money. We do it because we care about people in our communities. This is a calling.

The tax on hospital patients hurts us. It hurts our nurses. It hurts our hospitals. It hurts our communities. And it hurts the economy. No single industry in Connecticut has been asked to carry this level of state budget reduction in so short a timeframe.

The tax means that hospitals have fewer resources to bring to bear on an ever increasing demand for services. Equally IMPORTANT is the need to modernize existing buildings, add electronic medical records, and recruit strong caregivers.

Despite the loss of \$336 million dollars in this state budget cycle, Connecticut's hospitals have done extraordinary things to minimize the impact on patient care but the negative effects of these revenue losses are increasingly real.

Johnson Memorial Hospital itself has made some difficult choices in our effort to minimize the impact of this state payment reduction on patient care. Some of these choices include:

- The elimination of nearly 22 FTEs, all of which exceeded the new minimum wage increase of \$10.10 recently proposed for Connecticut;
- The elimination of a wage increase for all of our employees in FY2013/14 and the reduction of other health and non-health benefit payments;
- A minimum of 50% reduction in the amount of community support provided for a wide range of local activities;
- Evaluating current services provided to communities such as post acute and home based services.

More importantly, in an era where we hear a great deal about the rise of the low wage breadwinner, hospitals represent some of our local communities' biggest employers and pay salaries that exceed the current state minimum wage. In fact, most hospital positions pay more than the current state and national proposals that would raise the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour.

I don't want to see hospitals struggle or fail. The tax impact to Johnson Memorial Hospital is over 1.3 million dollars which jeopardizes not only my job but 1100 jobs of my co workers potentially causing a loss of a strong community resource. We need good healthcare for the people of Connecticut. We need great caregivers to provide it. And we need stable resources to fund it.

I urge you to support this legislation. Help eliminate the hospital tax and help hospitals thrive in the State of Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration of our position.