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SB 377 An Act Concerning Occupational Licensing

General Law Committee,

I am opposed to SB 377 not because we should have uniform standards for occupational licensing, but because as of the date of today's public hearing, there is no specificity to this bill.

As of noon today, there is no other testimony posted to this bill giving an indication for the purpose of this bill, including from the Dept. of Consumer Protection. There is no written language as to what this bill seeks to accomplish or problem to solve. As of this date, bill reads only:

Section 1. (NEW) (Effective from passage) The Commissioner of Consumer Protection shall adopt regulations, in accordance with the provisions of chapter 54 of the general statutes, regarding uniform standards for the licensing of persons required to be licensed by the Department of Consumer Protection.

As such, it is impossible to give any opinion as to the bill's positive or negative impact or weigh its needs.

Yet, in a moment, I will proceed with my testimony by making assumptions, like in a "create your own adventure" book.

As a citizen, I expect more from my elected leaders in the view of disclosure and planning to allow the people to have a say in their government. If there is such a dire need that any concept that may be added to this bill be passed, then adequate public notice should be given to allow comment and participation in the democratic process. After all, the legislature is supposed to represent and advocate for the people of the State of Connecticut and in their best interests.

Whatever may come of this bill, I urge the legislature to REJECT and vote "NO" on this bill, no matter its good intentions for lack of notice and need.

Should this be the best bill ever thought up in the world, one would think there would be language presented by today's date stating its great qualities and need to be passed. Laws should never be redundant, nor crafted in secrecy.

Briefly, I'll discuss what this bill might possibly mean, although from my vantage point, I am only making assumptions and guesses: 1) Of course DPC should make regulations to carry out its mission. Is this bill redundant to current practice? 2) However, multiple agencies regulate licensures, including DPH. 3) What does "uniform" mean? Some licenses require testing. Those tests are devised differently according to practice.

One concern I have is that DPC or organizations that govern such testing may create rules that are unchecked by the legislature or the profession they seek to regulate. My concern is this will limit the ability for individuals to enter a new field, particularly during tough economic times such as those we experience today.

I suppose that if this bill seeks to correct a minor technical problem in current law, then by all

means pass it. Yet, I fail to see how such a minor change should interrupt the duties of DCP. And the broad language in the law doesn't seem to suggest this.

If there is a reason this bill is needed – for instance, correcting a vaguery that has been brought up in a lawsuit against the state, or some similar instance, the legislature should be able to state such purpose in a notes section under the proposed bill. Or, perhaps a bill might be requested by the Department itself for a similar purpose. This would guide the public to understand why bills are needed. It would also assist the public in knowing how our government currently operates.

I have one more concern. I'm sure the legislature is aware that personnel change within state government from time to time. Practices by certain managers and employees may change according to personnel changes. I do hope that 'uniform standards' are not enacted in such a way as to limit flexibility and common sense decision making by employees at DCP when they are in the best interests of the public and the general spirit of the Department's mission, goal's and service. Writing new regulations sometimes do this in a way like writing computer code for software. Unlike computers, employees need flexibility at times, particularly when red tape seems to hinder economic opportunity and the ability to provide for citizens' families through employment.

On an ancillary note, I would hope that in the future a bill concerning occupational licensing would consider the average salaries of those occupations the state seeks to regulate and have license fees reflect the relative income projections of someone employed in one profession to each other. Or, perhaps a new concept could be to offer a uniform, low cost license fee for every possible license. This fee could be perhaps \$25 or \$50 to ensure they are reasonably affordable and persons seeking to move up on the economic ladder from a previously lower income job could do so.

Currently, many lower paying occupations have some very steep licensing fees when compared with professions with higher annual salaries. For example, paramedics pay \$150 per year while it is my understanding that nurses – who often make almost twice as much money per hour – pay a substantially lesser fee. This prevents entry and sustaining license into those fields on an annual basis and is contrary to the capitalistic economic system we have. It also makes it difficult for individuals to maintain practice should there be an interruption in their employment in that field even if they keep up their training.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this bill – even though its difficult to do so.