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Testimony in Support of Governor's Bill

No. 36 LCO 249: *An Act Concerning the Governor's Recommendations to Improve Access to Health Care.*

February 28, 2014

Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and members of the Public Health Committee: My name is Deborah Poerio, and I am President of Integrated Health Services, the non-profit organization that administers 7 School Based Health Centers in East Hartford, Connecticut. Most importantly, I have been a Nurse Practitioner for 29 years, of which most of that time has been providing services to underinsured children in Connecticut that had little access to them. That is why I am here today to testify in favor of the Governor's Bill No. 36:

An Act Concerning the Governor's Recommendations to Improve Access to Health Care by removing the collaborative agreement requirement that currently exists.

- The agreement is a legal requirement only and does not affect scope of practice
- Collaboration is consultation and is what every ethical practitioner, all doctors, therapists, nurses, engage in - it is asking a question of a colleague on a medical issue of concern for one's patient. Doctors often do this with specialists as do social workers with psychiatrists, and dental hygienists with dentists.
- Bill #36 does not impact any ethical standards of practice relating to collaboration and consultation. It only removes the legal requirement that currently serves as a barrier to accessing care. Licensure, certification, and standards of care still exist to ensure that nurse practitioners are working within their licensed and certified scope of practice-just as dental hygienists, doctors, social workers, and registered nurses.
- APRNs already have full practice authority; this bill simply allows APRNs to open practices and remain in practice should their collaborating physician retire, move, or discontinue the collaborating agreement. It also enables those nurse practitioners that see large numbers of Medicaid children and families the ability to create medical homes, as there is insufficient practices that will accept these clients.
- Increasing the number of primary care providers is necessary to meet the needs of the newly insured.

The need to increase access and the number of providers, especially in the uninsured and underinsured population, is essential if we are to address the growing needs, and declining number of providers. Allowing Nurse Practitioners to practice without a collaborative agreement simply means that they must practice under the scope in which they are educated, licensed, and certified-the same as every licensed health care provider. It is time to equalize practice standards and allow nurse practitioners the ability to operate as all other licensed professionals practice-independent of a collaborative agreement. It is time to REMOVE barriers to care and enable qualified providers to address the tremendous health care needs that exist in Connecticut.

We are fortunate to have a Governor who has passed the nations' first mental health legislation for children, and continues to propose legislation that remove barriers to care. I applaud his, and the Public Health Committee's, goal to right this wrong and thank you very much for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Sincerely,

Deborah Poerio, APRN, MS, FNP-BC
President/CEO, Integrated Health Services, Inc.