



CHCA

CONNECTICUT HEALTH CARE ASSOCIATES

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Testimony of Jose Perez, RN
On Senate Bill 885
An Act Concerning Reports of Nurse Staffing Levels
Before the Public Health Committee

My name is Jose Perez and I am a Registered Nurse and Executive Secretary of Connecticut Health Care Associates, National Union of Hospital and Healthcare Employees, AFSCME. CHCA represents over 1000 nurses and health care workers in Connecticut, including over 500 nurses and techs at Waterbury Hospital.

The Department of Public Health issued a report on adverse events and medical mistakes in Connecticut hospitals and found a disturbing news in error rates in our state. According to a summary published by the Connecticut Health Investigative Team on January 5, 2015; The report, covering 2013, marks the first time that the number of so-called “adverse events” in hospitals and other health care facilities has topped 500 – double the number in 2012, when 244 such incidents were reported. Much of the increase was due to an expansion of reporting on pressure ulcers, which added a new category with 233 “unstageable” ulcers that were not counted before. Even without that category, however, reports of adverse events climbed 20 percent over 2012.

While this report does not link the rise in medical errors with staffing levels, studies like the one published in May 2002 in the New England Journal of Medicine conclude that “(a) higher proportion of hours of nursing care provided by registered nurses and a greater number of hours of care by registered nurses per day are associated with better care for hospitalized patients”. As a Registered Nurse I have seen firsthand how patients and nurses suffer due to the lack of staffing. The lack of staff also increases nursing burnout, medication errors, stress, and may decrease patient satisfaction.



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In Waterbury Hospital, economic factors and failed efforts to find a for-profit purchaser has led to staff reductions and layoffs, resulting in already overworked nurses being asked to do more. Demanding nurses to cover more patients with less staff by increasing their patient loads is not only unethical it is unsafe. Common sense and scholarly research suggest that this is a recipe for increased errors and diminished quality of care.

Current law requires hospitals to create prospective staffing plans. Senate 885 would require the hospitals to share those plans with DPH and to require staffing plans to include the ratios of patients to RNs, LPNs and assistive personnel per unit as well as note the difference between planned and actual staffing levels, and develop action plans to address discrepancies between desired and actual staffing levels. This proposal is a patient-centered measure to increase transparency and educate healthcare consumers and payers on the quality of care that hospitals actually provide. Our union would urge your committee to pass this important piece of legislation.

Our union also supports HB5325, AAC community health needs assessments and for-profit hospitals.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Jose Perez, RN, BSN
CHCA Executive Secretary