

ORAL TESTIMONY OF JOAN DOBBINS on March 12, 2015

Regarding SB 898 An Act Concerning Professional Doctoral Degree Programs

Submitted at the request of Chair Bartolomeo

My name is Joan Dobbins. I am a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) and Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN). I am the Program Director of the Nurse Anesthesia Program of Hartford (www.hartfordanesthesia.com) which is affiliated with Central Connecticut State University. I have been a CRNA for over 30 years and a Program Director for over 20 years. I believe I am well qualified to answer the two major questions I have heard from the Committee members this afternoon concerning DEMAND and COSTS.

First – DEMAND.

In my mind DEMAND means two things. First, the demand for the Program from potential CRNA Students and second, the demand from future employers of the graduates.

Potential students. In an average year, I receive 100 applications for the Nurse Anesthesia Program. I can accept 12. Acceptance into the program is extremely competitive. The average applicant who is accepted has a GPA of 3.5, has As in their prerequisite science courses and has over 3 years of Intensive Care Nursing experience. We accept *the best of the best*. There is a *huge demand* for this type of Advanced Practice specialty training in no small part due to the lucrative reimbursement that CRNAs receive; the average salary of a CRNA in Connecticut is \$150,000.

There are relatively few choices for the potential CRNA student in terms Practice Doctorates; CCSU would be the ONLY such PUBLIC program in New England. The only Practice Doctorates (DNPs) for CRNAs offered in the North East are (<http://home.coa.us.com/accredited-programs/Pages/CRNA-School-Search.aspx>) accessed March 13, 2015:

1. Quinnipiac University – Hamden, CT
2. Fairfield University – Fairfield, CT
3. Albany Medical College – Albany, NY
4. Rutgers University – Newark, NJ

Ours would be PUBLIC and the degree is tailored to CRNAs (DNAP), not a generic Practice Doctorate for any Advanced Practice Nurse (DNP). I believe this would make it *especially attractive* to potential students. The market for this type of Degree is RIFE!

In addition to Entry-Level education, CCSU would also offer a *Doctoral Completion option* for Students who are already CRNAs with Masters Degrees who want to finish their education.

Demand from Potential Employers. Over the course of my 20 years' experience as a Program Director, I can confidently state that our graduates have always been able to secure jobs well before they graduate. While some return to their state of residence, many stay in Connecticut. There are already approximately 400 CRNAs in Connecticut. There are approximately 37,000 CRNAs in the country. The demand for CRNA services will remain stable or grow depending on

whose data you look at. We all know that our population is aging, healthcare is becoming more complex and if the Affordable Care Act continues to enroll thousands of people in health insurance, then there will be an increased demand for CRNA services which include anesthesia and sedation for surgical and diagnostic procedures and obstetric analgesia in hospitals and out-patient surgicenters.

COSTS: Currently a CRNA student pays about \$30,000 for their Master's Degree from CCSU. This is mostly because of the creative, mutually beneficial partnership between CCSU and the private hospital programs. It is the Private hospitals/anesthesia groups that provide all the clinical education and experiences, and that maintain the accreditation standards required from the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs. CCSU provides faculty to teach foundational didactic courses. The faculty at the individual hospitals provide all the clinical education. Obviously there is a HUGE return on investment for the CRNA student. Going forward, when the Master's Degree transitions to the Doctoral Degree, I anticipate that the increase in COSTS to the university (CCSU/State of Connecticut) will be more than offset by the increase in TUITION paid by the students. I am sure CCSU has provided you with a detailed breakdown of the proposed budget. The proposed doctoral degree will increase the credits from 31 to 75. The cost per credit for 700-level courses is higher than the cost per credit of 500-level master's credits.

Here is my *rough estimation* of costs:

Currently 30 Master's degree students pay \$30,000 = \$900,000

Potentially 20 Entry-level Doctoral degree students will pay \$70,000 = \$1,400,000

Plus potentially 5 Doctoral Completion students will pay \$40,000 = \$200,000

The increase in revenue is approximately \$700,000.

I think the increase in costs (CRNA Doctoral Faculty) will be covered.

Do not forget that IF CCSU DOESN'T MOVE FORWARD with the Doctoral Degree the PROGRAM WILL CLOSE and ALL REVENUES will CEASE.

Thank you for your attention and I am happy to answer any other questions. I can be reached at HartfordNAP@gmail.com or 860-904-0320