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AFT Healthcare 

Testimony of

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Public Health Committee

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HB 5548 AN ACT REQUIRING HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS TO BE VACCINATED AGAINST INFLUENZA

Good afternoon Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is John Brady and I have worked at Backus Hospital in Norwich for 21 years, 16 as a Registered Nurse. I am President of the Backus Federation of Nurses, AFT Local 5149. I write to you today to urge you to oppose HB 5448 An Act Requiring Health Care Providers to be Vaccinated against Influenza.

First let me say that the Backus Federation on Nurses, AFT Connecticut, and AFT, all encourage our members to be fully vaccinated, including vaccinated against influenza. However, we recognize problem with making this mandatory.

There are religious and health reasons why mandation is undesirable and there is also history of the vaccine being ineffective in some years. In fact, this year's vaccination was ineffective and many health care providers, who had been vaccinated, contracted influenza, including myself. The influenza vaccination had given me a false belief of protection. The 1-2% of the registered nurses at Backus who opted out of receiving the vaccine wear masks when in a patient care area, an agreement we negotiated with the Hospital. None of these nurses have been stricken with influenza. One could argue that if I had opted out and had worn a mask, I might have been more protected and thus, my patients better protected.

Mandating vaccination would force some to leave healthcare, due to religious or medical reasons and would not offer protection in years like this. In fact, some Backus employees not covered by a collective bargaining agreement have resigned rather than be forced to be vaccinated against their beliefs.

We will continue to advocate for the influenza vaccination and the use of masks when near patients with symptoms and we are confident that we can maintain a 98% vaccination rate and a 100% vaccination/mask rate under our current agreement. We remain opposed to mandatory vaccinations.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance.

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