

Testimony on Raised Bill No. 5014

By Kelly Tobin RN, BSN

Connecticut Legislators on Higher Education and Employment Advancement

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Dear Legislators,

I am writing to encourage you to support the proposed Bill, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TAX CREDIT FOR PROVIDERS OF CLINICAL NURSING EXPERIENCES. I am in favor of supporting this Bill as I have personally experienced barriers to finding preceptors at clinical placements as a graduate Psychiatric Mental-Health Nurse Practitioner student. Not only am I a graduate student, I have been working as a Registered Nurse at Hartford Hospital for the past twelve years and am a single mother. The financial burden alone of continuing to pay off my undergraduate student loans while taking on a tremendous amount of debt to advance my career as a Nurse Practitioner, makes this undertaking even more cumbersome. Being a single mother, bearing the majority of child related expenses compounds the financial strain, and nearly prevented me from enrolling in graduate school altogether. Every dollar is accounted for and each semester that I add to my student loan debt, I have now included the additional expense of a stipend which only pulls the strings of a financial noose tighter. The stipend is for my preceptor's time invested to educate, mentor and answer endless questions, which ultimately propel me forward on my educational path towards becoming a Psychiatric Mental-Health Nurse Practitioner.

I have been a registered nurse working at Hartford Hospital since February of 2008. For the last six years, I have worked for our hospital's S.T.A.R. Team (Specially Trained and Responsive) which involves working on any of the medical-surgical and cardiology units along with specific areas of the emergency department. To gain the experience and knowledge that has enabled me to become a competent nurse who is qualified to work on over 20 nursing units within the hospital, did not happen on its own. I acquired my skillset and knowledge base not only from my years of experience working at the bedside, but with the support and mentorship from highly trained senior nurses. Although my ability to serve as a preceptor to new graduate nurses is limited due to the nature of my current position, I understand the importance of having highly trained and qualified nurses. My first four years as a nurse were spent working on the Advanced Organ Failure and Transplant Unit where I became a preceptor myself. I understand the time, patience, knowledge and skillset required to teach the aesthetics and empirics of the practice.

Psychiatrists and Psychiatric Mental-Health Nurse Practitioners often work under extremely busy capacities, carrying high volume patient loads. The patient demands far exceed the supply of providers. Asking an established advanced provider to further carry the burden of precepting a nursing student is often a turn-off for many unless there is potential for a significant financial gain. Their time is extremely valuable and many

advanced providers expect to be compensated appropriately. In fact, I have personally been declined the opportunity to work with a well-renowned psychiatrist when they became aware of how little the stipend was. I personally feel the psychiatrist was deserving of greater financial compensation however, I could not comprehend suggesting we as students bear the burden of such expenses. It is challenging to place a financial value on educating, mentoring, supervising, role-modeling and molding advance practicing nursing students into the providers we aspire them to be, however it seems to be the reality of the situation. Providing a tax credit to the preceptors, will likely attract more nurses and Advanced Providers to accept nursing students and further, will ease the financial burden placed on the students themselves.

Psychiatric Mental-Health Nurse Practitioners have potential to make a significant contribution providing mental health services, medication management, psychotherapeutic interventions, crisis intervention and mental-health promotion and maintenance. They can also contribute to closing the gap of the shortage in advanced providers required to adequately meet the mental-health needs of our society.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony and I hope you will consider the potential positive impact of passing this Bill into legislation. This Bill not only affects the preceptors, but significantly reduces the financial burden placed on students.

Very truly yours,
Kelly Tobin, R.N., B.S.N.
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