

**TESTIMONY OF  
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE  
LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE  
Thursday, March 11, 2021**

**SB 1002, An Act Concerning Labor Issues Related To COVID-19, Personal Protective Equipment And Other Staffing Matters, and HB 6595, An Act Concerning Labor Matters Related To COVID-19, Personal Protective Equipment And Other Staffing Issues**

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **SB 1002, An Act Concerning Labor Issues Related To COVID-19, Personal Protective Equipment And Other Staffing Matters, and HB 6595, An Act Concerning Labor Matters Related To COVID-19, Personal Protective Equipment And Other Staffing Issues**. CHA opposes these bills as written.

Since early 2020, Connecticut's hospitals and health systems have been at the center of the global public health emergency, acting as the critical partner in the state's response to COVID-19. Hospitals expanded critical care capacity, stood up countless community COVID-19 testing locations, and are a critical component of the vaccine distribution plan. The response of hospital workers to the pandemic has been inspiring. They risked their lives and endured great personal sacrifices to attend to the care and well-being of patients and in the process saved thousands of lives. The demands of the global pandemic on Connecticut's hospitals tested the resilience of hospital staff and they have responded with professionalism, grace, and courage. We do not know where we would be without their hard work and dedication.

Recognizing the importance of a dedicated healthcare workforce, hospitals made changes to their healthcare and benefit packages early in the global pandemic so that no employee would be required to pay a co-pay for any COVID-19 test or treatment. Their commitment to the health and well-being of their employees during the pandemic has been essential to the success of Connecticut's response to the pandemic. While not an exhaustive list, we think it is important to share with the Committee some of the many things hospitals did to respond to employee needs. Hospitals:

- Modified work schedules and hours around childcare and family care needs.
- Developed onsite childcare options.
- Provided additional sick time and flexibility around its use.
- Provided flexibility around the use and extension of Personal Leave time.
- Offered options from the hospital cafeterias for "grab-and-go meals" or take-home family dinners.
- Provided grants to employees for household expenses.

- Issued bonuses.
- Provided alternative housing, including hotels, to protect employees' family members.
- Offered onsite Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services to staff.
- Created additional employee wellness programs/areas, including "Buddy programs," new staff areas that provided quiet space to help reduce stress/anxiety through meditation, counseling, sleep, or spiritual guidance.

The pandemic has also had a significant financial impact on hospitals and has tested their financial viability. Imposing additional costs on hospitals will further weaken their financial condition and stability. Hospitals endured unexpected and significant decreases in revenue, exacerbated by unprecedented and unanticipated increases in the cost of providing care during the pandemic. This is no time to impose new costs on hospitals.

For these reasons, to the extent that the Committee and the Connecticut General Assembly would like to pursue the policies in these bills, we respectfully suggest the state look at the new expected federal COVID-19 dollars to fund them.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.