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TESTIMONY RE: APPROPRIATIONS TO FUND PRIORITIES RELATED TO THE
SHORTAGES OF NURSING AND ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Appropriations Committee Hearing

February 11, 2008

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Merrill and members of the Appropriations Committee.

Thank-you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Nurses' Association (CNA), the professional organization for registered nurses in Connecticut. I am Dr. Mary Jane Williams, past-president of the Connecticut Nurses' Association, current chairperson of its Government Relations Committee and professor and chair of nursing at the University of Hartford. I have practiced nursing for over 40 years and have been educating nurses in Connecticut in both the public and private sector for over 35 years.

Connecticut Nurses' Association urges the Appropriations Committee to continue the strategy advocated by the Allied Health Workforce Policy Board (AHWPB) that has the potential to address our existing and impending shortages in the nursing and allied health workforce. Current recommendations include five components – **faculty shortages; student support services and academic remediation; increase understanding of allied health careers and competition with other careers; expand employer-sponsored, on-site, job-specific basic skills courses; and expand allied health and nursing programs.** My focus today is the **faculty shortage.**

“Nearly every Connecticut degree program within nursing and allied health is vulnerable to the current, or anticipated, faculty shortage problem. In fact, colleges and universities

sought out 57 waivers for faculty from the State Board of Nurse Examiners in 2006 and 2007. Where sufficient faculty exists, it is recognized that securing replacements will be difficult. It is therefore in the best interests of the State to create a plan to develop instructor talent. The Scholarship-for-Service model has been used successfully in government and the armed forces to produce employees for areas of need. Connecticut should invest in such a program this legislative session with an allocation of \$1,500,000 for each of the next ten years.” (AHWPB draft report 1/28/08)

We have the data. Shortages in the nursing workforce are well documented (aging of Connecticut’s population; an older population requires substantially more health care services; the projected shrinkage in the working age population (age 20-64 years) undermines efforts to recruit nurses and allied health professionals). Advances in medical technology contribute to an ever-widening gap between health care workforce supply and demand for health care services. With these effects, health care workforce shortages directly affect access to care, higher costs, and lower quality. The nursing shortages in Connecticut are projected to be among the worst in the nation. One of the major factors contributing to the nursing workforce shortage is the shortage of faculty.

“By the year 2020, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) projects that more than one million new Registered Nurses (RNs) will be needed in the U.S. healthcare system to meet the demand for nursing care. HRSA projects that nursing schools must increase the number of graduates by 90 percent in order to adequately address the nursing shortage. With preliminary data showing a 7.4 percent increase in graduations from baccalaureate nursing programs this year, schools are falling far short of meeting this target.” (Retrieved from www.aacn.nche.edu/Media/ppt/02-07turnedaway.ppt on 2/10/08)

Though interest in nursing careers remains strong, many individuals seeking to enter the profession cannot be accommodated in nursing programs due to faculty and resource constraints. Preliminary American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) data show that 30,709 qualified applications were turned away from entry-level baccalaureate

nursing programs in 2007. Connecticut nursing programs turned away over 1,100 qualified applicants in 2006. The primary barriers to accepting all qualified students at nursing colleges and universities continue to be insufficient faculty, clinical placement sites, and classroom space. Retrieved from www.aacn.nche.edu/Media/ppt/02-07turnedaway.ppt on 2/10/08)

Therefore, the greatest need in the nursing workforce is for nurses prepared at the masters and doctoral degree levels in order to meet the growing demand for qualified nursing faculty.

Our recommendations to ensure an adequate nursing supply will require a focused and sustained effort over two or three decades. The recommendation for the faculty shortages is the most urgent.

- Address the shortage of nursing faculty by (1) implementing a nursing **faculty scholarship program** administered by the Department of Higher Education, in consultation with the Connecticut Allied Health Workforce Policy Board. (2) establish a nursing faculty student loan program to provide **loans** to state residents who pursue a master's or doctoral degree from an accredited program (MSN, DNP, DNSc, EdD, PhD) in the state and who agree to engage in nursing instruction in an approved nursing program in the state and (3) provide grants to institutions of higher education for additional nursing faculty positions.

Thank you for consideration of these recommendations that represent a consensus position of health care workforce and nursing leadership. It is essential that this sustained funding be supported if we are to protect the public we all serve. We are available for further clarification.