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**TESTIMONY RE: RB 6336 AN ACT CONCERNING NURSES PURSUING  
ADVANCED DEGREES**  
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Hearing

Good morning Senator Handley, Representative Willis and members of the Committee on Higher Education and Employment.

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, 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.

The nursing shortage in Connecticut is projected to be among the worst in the nation. Currently we appear to be in the "eye of the storm." The down turn in the economy has forced many individuals to continue to work, work settings are not hiring at the rate anticipated due to their own economic constraints and the entire workforce is aging as is the population. If we do not recognize the causes of lull in the storm and do not continue to address the Allied Health Care Workforce shortage we will be headed toward the "perfect storm" in health care. The age of our nurses, coupled with the growing demand for providers, will come as we experience a huge decrease in nurses and faculty due to retirement.

The major factor contributing to the nursing workforce shortage is the shortage of faculty. The facts about the nursing faculty shortage are well documented. Faculty is aging. It is

estimated that 75% of the current faculty population is expected to retire by 2019. All educational settings are filling positions with part time faculty; this has the potential of having a negative effect on the program and the employee. Part time employees may not be invested in the total work of the program and the employee may not be paid for the value they bring to the educational setting. It is also a growing problem because nursing faculty are not prepared at the Doctoral Level. Only 350 to 400 nursing students receive doctoral degrees each year and the pool of candidates for full time positions is limited. This lack of qualified faculty impacts the credibility of nursing within the university setting and limits those individuals who are prepared for leadership roles and /or compete for research funding (NLN, 2005).

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing reports that nursing schools nationally are struggling to fill positions. The average age of doctorally prepared nursing faculty by rank was 59.1 years for professors, 56.1 years for associate professors and 51.7 years for assistant professors. Faculty does not reflect the demographics of the population. Only 11.5 % are underrepresented groups and 5.7 are males. In its most recent survey AACN found 45.1 % of all faculty are doctorally prepared.

The major reasons, most critical reasons for not hiring faculty are reported to be 1) inability to recruit qualified faculty 2) limited pool of doctorally prepared faculty and 3) lack of educational experience.

We as responsible citizens need to recognize the potential impact a severe shortage of workforce providers will have on the quality of care provided across all settings and ultimately on the health of the public. We need to put what few resources we have into the systems that will give us the best and most rapid return as we try to grow our nursing workforce. We must stop turning qualified students away from programs; we must mobilize our nurses in an attempt to prepare them for leadership positions within academic settings, it is the right initiative for the state.

Therefore we recommend;

- 1). Continued funding of programs that provide mobility for nurses.
- 2). Support of doctoral education as we attempt to prepare faculty for university teaching positions.
- 3) Continued Support of the Allied Health Policy Workforce Board.

Thank you,

Mary Jane M. Williams PhD, RN

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Section 1. There shall be established a Connecticut Nursing and Allied Health Faculty Scholarship Program to award scholarships to individuals that is designed to recruit and prepare students for careers in the Nursing and Allied Health faculty.

Section 2. Individuals shall be selected to receive scholarships under this section through a competitive process primarily on the basis of academic merit, with consideration given to financial need of the individual.

Section 3. To carry out the Faculty Scholarship Program the Department of Higher Education shall enter into contractual agreements with individuals selected under which the individuals agree to serve as full-time employees of an institution of higher education as designated by the Commissioner for the period described in subsection (f)(1), in positions identified by the Commissioner and for which the individuals are qualified, in exchange for receiving a scholarship.

Section 4. In order to be eligible to participate in the Program, an individual must:

(a) be enrolled or accepted for enrollment as a full-time student at an institution of higher education, as a junior or senior undergraduate or graduate student, in an academic field or discipline described in the list made available under subsection (d);

(b) be a United States citizen or permanent resident; and

(c) at the time of the initial scholarship award, not be an employee.

(d) An individual seeking a scholarship under this section shall submit an application to the Department at such time, in such manner, and containing such information, agreements, or assurances as the Department may require.

(e) The Commissioner shall make publicly available a list of academic programs and fields of study for which scholarships under the Program may be utilized and shall update the list as necessary.

(f)(1) The Department may provide a scholarship under the Program for an academic year if the individual applying for the scholarship has submitted to the Department, as part of the application required under subsection 4(d), a proposed academic program leading to a degree in a program or field of study on the list made available under subsection 4(e).

(2) An individual may not receive a scholarship under this section for more than 4 academic years, unless the Commissioner grants a waiver.

(3) The dollar amount of a scholarship under this section for an academic year shall be determined under regulations issued by the Department, but shall in no case exceed the cost of attendance.

(4) A scholarship provided under this section may be expended for tuition, fees, and other authorized expenses as established by the Department by regulation.

(5) The Department may enter into a contractual agreement with an institution of higher education under which the amounts provided for a scholarship under this section for tuition, fees, and other authorized expenses are paid directly to the institution with respect to which the scholarship is provided.

(g)(1) The period of service for which an individual shall be obligated to serve as an employee of an institution of higher education as designated by the Commissioner, except as provided in subsection (g)(2), 24 months for each academic year for which a scholarship under this section is provided.

(2)(A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B), obligated service under paragraph (1) shall begin not later than 60 days after the individual obtains the educational degree for which the scholarship was provided.

(B) The Department may defer the obligation of an individual to provide a period of service under paragraph (1) if the Commissioner determines that such a deferral is appropriate. The Department shall prescribe the terms and conditions under which a service obligation may be deferred through regulation.

(h)(1) Scholarship recipients who fail to maintain a high level of academic standing, as defined by the Department by regulation, who are dismissed from their educational institutions for disciplinary reasons, or who voluntarily terminate academic training before graduation from the educational program for which the scholarship was awarded, shall be in breach of their contractual agreement and, in lieu of any service obligation arising under such agreement, shall be liable to the State of Connecticut for repayment within 1 year after the date of default of all scholarship funds paid to them and to the institution of higher education on their behalf under the agreement, except as provided in subsection (h)(2). The repayment period may be extended by the Department when determined to be necessary, as established by regulation.

(2) Scholarship recipients who, for any reason, fail to begin or complete their service obligation after completion of academic training, or fail to comply with the terms and conditions of deferment established by the Department pursuant to subsection (g)(2)(B), shall be in breach of their contractual agreement. When recipients breach their agreements for the reasons stated in the preceding sentence, the recipient shall be liable to the State of Connecticut for an amount equal to:

(A) the total amount of scholarships received by such individual under this section; plus

(B) the interest on the amounts of such awards which would be payable if at the time the awards were received they were loans bearing interest at the maximum legal prevailing rate, as determined by the Treasurer of the State of Connecticut, multiplied by 3.

(i)(1) Any obligation of an individual incurred under the Program (or a contractual agreement thereunder) for service or payment shall be canceled upon the death of the individual.

(2) The Department shall by regulation provide for the partial or total waiver or suspension of any obligation of service or payment incurred by an individual under the Program (or a contractual agreement thereunder) whenever compliance by the individual is impossible or would involve extreme hardship to the individual, or if enforcement of such obligation with respect to the individual would be contrary to the best interests of the Program.

(j) For purposes of this section:

(1) Department means the Department of Higher Education

(2) Commissioner means the Commissioner of the Department of Higher Education

(1) the term 'cost of attendance' has the meaning given that term in section 472 of the Higher Education Act of 1965;

(2) the term 'institution of higher education' has the meaning given that term in section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965; and

(3) the term 'Program' means the Connecticut Nursing and Allied Health Faculty Scholarship Program established under this section.

(j)(1) There is authorized to be appropriated to the Administration for the Program \$\_\_\_\_\_ for each fiscal year.

(2) Amounts appropriated under this section shall remain available for 2 fiscal years.