

Rell cuts adult education program for licensed practical nurses

Gov. M. Jodi Rell announced Nov. 30 she is suspending the state's adult education program for licensed practical nurses as part of her cuts to reduce the budget deficit.

The program is offered at 10 state technical high schools, and produces about 350 LPNs every 16 months.

"I'm shocked the Governor would cut such a successful and necessary program," said Rick Tanasi, president of the State Vocational Federation of Teachers.

The cut affects about 400 students, as well as 44 teachers. The governor is able to make the cut without legislative approval.

"It's horrible. This program changed my life," said student Jessica LoRusso, 30, of Prospect, an LPN student at W.F. Kaynor Technical School in Waterbury. "This is a very affordable program and it helped get me back in the workforce."

Students pay \$4,850 in tuition, about 20 percent of the full cost of the program.

Three private schools offer LPN training in Connecticut, but some students, including LoRusso, said they can't afford to pay private tuition rates.

"In this economy, no one has \$30,000 to go to a private school," she said.

She said some students use the program as a bridge to become a registered nurse. The program's schedule during school hours is particularly beneficial for classmates who are single mothers, she said.

"We have a nursing shortage in Connecticut," said Katherine Martin, president of Lawrence & Memorial Hospital LPN/Techs union, Local 5051. "Cutting this program is a mistake and will have a direct impact on the public's health."