

December 8, 2009

Re: Support for the States Vocational Licensed Practical Nursing Program and
Opposition to suspension of the Licensed Practical Nursing Program

Chairmen and Chairwomen and members of the committee,

I would first like to thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the suspension of the Licensed Practical Nursing Program, which I strongly oppose. My name is Faye Warner; I hold a master's degree in nursing, as do all of my colleagues, and I am here on behalf of the Licensed Practical Nursing Program throughout the state of Connecticut.

For more than 50 years, the state run LPN programs have provided quality instruction and prepared thousands of nurses for the life-or-death tasks upon which Connecticut residents rely. In each class, we have approximately 400 students that are accepted from a pool of 1,120 applicants, who come from throughout our state. We train both men and women, groom them to succeed in their new careers, and ensure that immediately upon graduation our nurses are ready to live in, work for, and become taxpayers of the state of Connecticut. Because of the continued success of the program, our graduates are the preferred hires in many extended care facilities throughout the state, rather than the graduates of private schools.

It is the licensed practical nurse that we train who are on the front lines of patient care, who are responsible for keeping our parents and grandparents comfortable, and who make sure their personal hygiene is attended to, that they are cleaned and dressed each day, among many other tasks, when misfortune finds them needing the care of others.

I ask you to consider the ramifications of eliminating a program that has the obligation of training people to handle those vital responsibilities.

In 2006, the Connecticut Department of Labor stated that there would be a significant need and numerous job openings for Licensed Practical Nurses until 2016. Due to the aging population of both the nurses and the state, the need for nursing care, as well as nurses, will increase. During a time when unemployment has been rising, it makes no sense to eliminate a program that prepares people for a field that has a need to hire.

We are well aware of the dismal financial situation we are in right now; but do we really want to balance the state's budget on the backs of our patients? On the backs of our parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins and siblings, who depend on us- and you as the elected officials- to ensure that the people whose hands their lives are put into are capable and ready for the challenge?

In times like these, we all must do more with less, and difficult choices must be made. But stopping an entire program that is devoted to ensuring that Connecticut's patients receive the best possible care is reckless, irresponsible, and shortsighted.

The Connecticut Office for the Workforce Competitiveness has also made recommendations addressing the nursing shortage. Included in these recommendations was a partnership between the technical high school adult health care programs and the public and private colleges. In response to these recommendations, a partnership has been developed, facilitating our graduates to more smoothly articulate into the community college RN programs, an opportunity not offered by the private programs. Gov, Rell herself, in a letter to Hilda Solis, Secretary of the US Department of Labor, identifies this unique cooperation between technical health care programs and the community colleges as a reason to provide funding to the state.

How could Governor Rell shut down the state funded LPN programs when her request to the department of labor to answer the health care crisis in Connecticut includes the partnership between the technical schools and the colleges? It makes no sense to end programs that are working and adapting to the changing times when they are also so necessary to the public's welfare.

For these stated reasons, I ask that you reject the governor's proposal to suspend the LPN programs, and that you continue to invest in the future of our state by allowing us to continue to educate those who will become productive taxpayers capable of providing excellence in care to the elderly and infirmed of our state.

Thank you again for your time.