

**Written Testimony for the  
Higher Education & Workforce Advancement Committee  
From  
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On behalf of the member institutions of the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC), ***I am submitting testimony on SB 470, AAC the Shortage of Nursing and Allied Health Professionals, HB 5265, AAC the Deduction from the Income Tax for Donations to CHET, and HB 5611, AAC Municipal Bonding to Permit Towns to Fund Scholarship Funds for Residents.***

***SB 470, AAC the Shortage of Nursing and Allied Health Professionals:*** Among other things, this bill would provide support for recruitment and retention of faculty qualified to teach in nursing and allied health programs. Funding of such strategies would go a long way to solving the shortage of workers in these areas.

As noted in the recent report of the Allied Health Workforce Policy Board and as seen every day in Connecticut college and university nursing and allied health programs, finding qualified faculty to teach in these high need programs is quite difficult. This is in part due to the economic differentials between working at a college and working in a clinical setting. We just cannot compete nor can we adequately fund equipment and facility needs in these programs. The initiatives outlined in this bill would go a long way to improving the outlook for graduating the necessary number of students skilled in these critical fields.

**We urge the Committee to support the faculty scholarship for service program, the allied health faculty incentive program and other key elements of this bill.**

***HB 5265, AAC the Deduction from the Income Tax for Donations to CHET:*** This bill modifies the state income tax deduction for contributions to Connecticut Higher Education Trust Accounts by removing the maximum limits on allowable deductions as a way of encouraging saving for college. *We support this bill*, as it will add additional incentive for families to save for college on a regular basis. This proposal will help families, promote education and strengthen our economy by encouraging students to seek college degrees.

***HB 5611, AAC Municipal Bonding to Permit Towns to Fund Scholarship Funds for Residents*** This bill allows municipalities to use bonding authority to fund scholarship programs for town residents who graduate from town high schools. Scholarship funds connected to graduation from specific high schools have been used successfully in other states to increase high school graduation rates and standardized test scores and to reinvigorate communities and can play a positive role in Connecticut as we enhance our K-12 curriculum and graduation requirements.

We note that the bill limits the use of the scholarship funds to public colleges and universities. *We urge the Committee to amend the bill to allow an amount equal to the value of the public college tuition to be used at Connecticut's independent colleges and universities.* The independent higher education sector is strong in Connecticut. Of great significance is the fact that Connecticut residents make up 43% of all enrolled students attending CCIC institutions. We award 49% of all degrees granted in Connecticut, including 57% of all degrees received by minority students (four-year and above) and enroll 37% of all college students statewide including 51% of minority students attending four-year institutions. We must not leave out needy Connecticut students who wish to attend the diversity of independent colleges and universities.

**We urge the Committee to support the municipal scholarship bill but to amend it to allow students to receive an amount equal to public college tuition to be used at Connecticut's independent colleges and universities.**

## **Nursing Programs at CCIC Member Institutions**

**Fairfield University** helped to facilitate the recruitment of the Nurse Anesthesia Cohort in affiliation with the BHNAP, conducted onsite recruitment events in conjunction with area two year colleges and regional hospitals, worked with its Adult Programs Director to admit a cohort of second degree nursing candidates, and started a Clinical Nurse Leader track in the Master's program. Fairfield University also recruited a cohort of 14 students at Danbury Hospital. Fairfield is one of four nursing schools in the country selected to partner with the Department of Veterans Affairs in launching a new initiative that is geared to expanding the number of nursing faculty, enhancing the professional and scholarly development of nurses, increasing student enrollment by 1,000 students and promoting innovations in nursing education.

**Goodwin College** has initiated a comprehensive developmental education program to assist underserved and under-prepared student to enter allied health programs offering tutoring, mentoring and career exploration. Goodwin College has a number of employer partnerships in place to address workforce shortages including St. Francis Hospital for clinical preceptors for Goodwin nursing students, with Eastern CT Health Network (ECHN) to allow entry level workers in their hospitals and doctors' offices to pursue advanced training, with Hartford Hospital for clinical preceptors for their respiratory care students and Jefferson Radiology to upgrade the skills of their employees. Goodwin's first nursing class graduated in August 2005 and there are currently 192 RNs that have come out of the program with 244 active nursing students currently enrolled. Goodwin is in the process of putting together an RN to BSN program that will be presented to the Department of Higher Education in January '08 with a planned start in January '09. Goodwin has approximately 400-500 new allied health students (slots) since 2004.

**Sacred Heart University** was the first professional degree program to admit 60 to the nursing major as of fall 2005. SHU received a grant from the Connecticut Healthcare and Facilities Authority (CHEFA) that has provided direct support to 5 faculty pursuing doctorates, creation and implementation of a Nursing Education Certificate that may be acquired by RN to BSN to MSN students achieving a MSN in Administration, Family Nurse Practitioner or Clinical Nurse Leader and targeted recruitment of new minority students into both of these level programs with some scholarship support and a commitment to participate in nursing education as preceptors or faculty. SHU also received a prior grant from CHEFA to support expansion and enrichment of the clinical nursing laboratory and, on its own, has made significant investments in the clinical laboratory and has received and hired a full-time ten-month position for a Clinical Learning Coordinator. SHU partners with the Connecticut League for Nursing to offer a certificate in Home Health Nursing. This certificate allows RNs without BS degrees to assume supervisory roles in community health/home care organizations. SHU has significantly increased its capacity to graduate RNs to meet growing demand and admitted the largest class of sophomores this fall (N=60). SHU started the first CT Nurse Leader program in CT with the first graduates expected in 07-08.

**Saint Joseph College**—The Division of Nursing has expanded enrollment in the traditional pre-licensure program and has established an accelerated second degree program for completion in 16 months of dedicated study. Using a Connecticut Higher Education and Facilities Authority (CHEFA) grant, SJC is addressing workforce issues by promoting nursing to high school students, establishing academic supports to reduce attrition of enrolled students, and developing seamless progression options for associate

degree and diploma graduates interested in earning a BS degree. SJC graduate tracks offer advanced practice options in Family Practice or Psychiatric-Mental Health and a generic leadership option for those pursuing leadership, administrative or teaching roles.

**Saint Vincent's College** has increased its entering cohort size to 120 students and has added adjuncts to provide the required faculty-student ratio. SVC offers an RN Refresher Program each year. This year's cohort had nine students, all of whom have positions in nursing. SVC also offers a Certified Nurses Aid program that trains students in phlebotomy, EKG and other skills along with data entry. SVC has increased the size of its incoming Radiology Tech program and continues to have a waiting list to get into the program. SVC's Medical Assisting Certificate Program is beginning its second year of operation and will likely have a 100% increase in enrolled students, and its Pharmacy Tech program is in its second year of operation. To increase retention in all programs, SVC is developing a Developmental Learning Center with a dedicated developmental learning specialist. The College received a grant from Department of Higher Education to develop, market and offer on-line review courses in Anatomy and Physiology and Microbiology. The target population was students in nursing and allied health that had previously taken those courses and felt the need for review prior to starting or returning to courses in the nursing or allied health majors. Because students were taking these courses while they were on wait lists to get into nursing and allied health programs, often a year or more elapsed between completion of the science courses and the start of the courses in the major. The courses were developed during the spring 2007 semester and were offered during three different time frames during the summer. It has been predicted that satisfactory completion of one or both of these courses would serve to improve student success in the major and consequently increase retention rates in these programs. Data related to student retention after taking these courses is not yet available.

**Quinnipiac University** continues to increase enrollment to both the generic and one year accelerated nursing program. The one year accelerated program has experienced a 50% enrollment increase in the last year. A clinical partnership has been formed between Charlotte Hungerford Hospital and Quinnipiac University. A Nursing Education Specialist has been hired to work for both institutions. This partnership will help to secure more clinical placements, optimal clinical learning experiences, and student internship programs for nursing students. Quinnipiac's graduate nursing program has received a federal training grant for the fourth consecutive year from the Health Resources and Health Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The grant provides scholarships for students pursuing a master of science in nursing. Faculty are in the process of developing a one week summer camp (several sessions) for junior/senior level high school students who are interested learning more about the nursing profession as well as trying to attract more male high school and minority students into the nursing profession. This would be an innovative strategy to stimulate interest in the nursing profession. Activities for the camp will include: 1) job shadowing, 2) CPR certification; 3) introduction to nursing simulation, 4) introduction to the role of nurse, and 5) basic first aid.

The **University of Hartford** has a long-standing program at the MSN level in Nursing Education, Management and Community Public Health. All areas address specialties that are challenged as the shortage progresses. The Nursing Education specialty is well enrolled and the management focus is growing. Further growth of the program would

require funding for additional faculty and scholarships for students. Hartford has a post-master's certificate program for masters prepared nurses that was initially funded by a grant and that provides students with content and experiential activity. Hartford also has an RN/BSN program for registered nurses pursuing a Bachelors degree, who are licensed at the associates degree and/or diploma level. The current chair of the Nursing department is president of the Nursing Career Center of Connecticut. The Center has a DHE grant to work collaboratively with Goodwin College and Capital Community College to enhance articulation to a Bachelors degree in Nursing. This DHE grant includes St. Joseph's and CCSU. The Center is a nonprofit organization involved in recruitment, retention, and mobility.

**Yale University's** School of Nursing offers MSN and PhD degrees. Yale received a GANNS grant to support doctoral study for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. Two to three full-time PhD students are enrolled yearly. Yale has a long-standing MSN program focusing on advanced practice, which leads to preceptor and faculty roles. There are approximately 90 graduates per year from this program.