



**TESTIMONY
OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
Tuesday, February 4, 2003**

SB 424, An Act Establishing A Program For Impaired Nurses

The Connecticut Hospital Association appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of **Proposed SB 424, An Act Establishing A Program For Impaired Nurses.**

This bill would establish an impaired nurses program to intervene, evaluate and treat nurses with substance abuse problems in order that they may return to treating patients.

Connecticut hospitals are facing a nursing shortage that is growing at an alarming rate. At the same time we know that our nurses are not immune to the diseases of alcoholism and drug addiction that afflict a substantial percentage of the general population. The ability to provide a safe and effective treatment process for nurses with impairments is essential, both to provide patient safety and to return the nurse safely to the bedside at the appropriate time with structured monitoring.

We hope that this bill will provide an alternative, voluntary and private opportunity for the rehabilitation of licensed nurses. Connecticut is one of only thirteen states that do not have such a program. The punitive approach of our current system creates barriers to nurses reporting impairments and getting help. The lack of a constructive alternative to the standard disciplinary process is no doubt inhibiting nurses with such impairments from coming forward for treatment. Statistics from states with alternative programs demonstrate that more nurses will voluntarily enter alternative programs.

An alternative program with a focus on immediate treatment, guidance into recovery, relapse prevention and reentry into safe nursing practice with a highly structured format for monitoring is the best way to ensure that nurses get the support and help they need in a safe and carefully supervised manner and that patients get safe and effective care.

Thank you for your consideration of our position.

KKH:pas