

House Republican Press Release

October 22, 2007
Press Office: 860-240-8700

A VIEW FROM THE INSIDE
State Representative Ruth Fahrbach



State heading toward nursing shortage

A report by the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) indicates that by 2010, Connecticut will be short by approximately 11,000 nurses. The report also shows that by 2020, that number can very well double, and leave the state with less than half of the total number of nurses it needs.

A recent report by the legislature's non-partisan Office of Legislative Research (OLR) states that initiatives addressing the nursing shortage implemented by the state include the establishment or expansion of programs designed to increase the number of nursing faculty in the state. Other initiatives include loan repayment programs to provide incentives for nurses and other health care professionals to work in medically underserved areas; funding to various higher education institutions to increase their number of nursing graduates; establishing a loan forgiveness program for historically underrepresented students pursuing nursing careers, and recruitment and retention campaigns; and other allied health workforce initiatives.

During the 2007 legislative session, the General Assembly passed legislation to establish a pilot training program for nurse practitioners seeking to specialize in family practice. According an OLR report, under the program, the nurse practitioner receives one year of formal training at a community-based health center in a federally designated health professional shortage area, medically underserved area, or area with medically underserved populations. The pilot programs must begin by Oct. 1, 2008 and end by Oct. 1, 2010.

As far as funding to address the looming nursing shortage, OLR reports that the Department of Public Health (DPH) will receive \$375,000 in 2008 and 2009 to support initiatives to address nursing and allied health workforce shortages. These initiatives can include a faculty scholarship program, a nursing faculty student loan program, grants to higher education institutions for faculty positions, a recruitment and retention campaign to promote awareness of nursing and allied health careers, and support for an allied health workforce policy board.

Also, the budget provides funding in the amount of \$125,000 in 2008 and 2009 to DPH to establish a loan forgiveness program for historically under-represented students pursuing nursing careers.

In addition, UConn will receive funding totaling \$200,000 in 2008 and 2009 for the Masters Entry into Nursing Program. This program is designed for those with a bachelor's degree in a non-nursing field. Upon successful completion of the program, the student is awarded a certificate in basic nursing and can take the RN licensure exam.

The Connecticut State University system will get funds totaling \$295,000 for additional faculty positions to increase the number of state nursing graduates.

If you would like a copy of the full OLR report outlining steps that the legislature has taken to address the nursing shortage in Connecticut, you can contact my office at (860) 240-8700.

Rep Ruth Fahrback represents the 61st District, including Suffield, and parts of Windsor and East Granby, in the General Assembly.