

Testimony by the Connecticut Department of Higher Education  
Before the Judiciary Committee  
1 p.m. – L.O.B., Room 2E  
November 27, 2007

With regard to Proposal #13, concerning AAC nursing and mental health staff at correctional facilities, an act authorizing bonds of the state for various projects, we do not think it is in the best interest of students to implement a program which would encourage them to borrow additional loan funds. In our experience, a more effective way to provide an incentive to a target group of students to pursue a particular field of study and work in Connecticut is to follow a loan reimbursement model which provides stipends directly to students. Students use the stipends to pay down any validated student loan debt, federal or private, which they may have accumulated upon graduation.

This approach has worked well under the Department's Minority Teacher Incentive Program (MTIP). Under this program minority students who are enrolled in teacher preparation programs receive grants for college while pursuing their degree and then are eligible for loan reimbursement stipends to pay down any student loans if they teach in a Connecticut public elementary or secondary school for up to four years.

Loan forgiveness programs, such as the one envisioned under this proposed bill, are very expensive to operate and lock an agency into a loan servicing function for many years to come. Therefore, we recommend that the proposed program not provide loans directly from the state, but provide loan reimbursements for other loan balances if the student practices as a registered nurse in a state-operated facility or institution after receiving such a degree. A maximum per student stipend amount should be determined and included in the bill. We would be happy to assist the committee with developing the program and appropriate legislative language.