

State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY



PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING HARTFORD,
CT 06106-1591

Subgroup of the Task Force to Study Methods to Address the Shortage of Radiologic Technologists, Nuclear Medicine Technologists and Respiratory Care Practitioners in the State

Meeting Summary

Wednesday, November 13,

2024

2:30 PM on Zoom and YouTube Live

I. Convene Meeting and Review of the Charge

- Bernadette Mele convened the meeting at 2:31 PM.
- Attendance: Bernadette Mele, Matthew Green, and Karen Griffiths

II. Discussion on Recommendations

- Bernadette Mele introduced herself and stated why addressing the shortage is critical. She went over the legislative recommendations that the Task Force can recommend. These include legislative actions to support the workforce.
- Karen Griffiths agrees with most of the recommendations but has reservations about the recommendation about grant funds. She commented on partnering with hospitals to be able to send students and stated that is an issue across the board. The grant money may be used to create pathways and it could also be used for hospitals to do career fairs for hospital staff and high school students.

- Bernadette Mele introduced the next group of recommendations which would support educational institutions to expand pathways to enter the field. She also went over recommendations to support current technologists and practitioners as well as supporting new students and new graduates. Another group of recommendations is supporting healthcare facilities by incentivizing facility participation in training and employment.
- Karen Griffiths thinks that the recommendations regarding supporting healthcare facilities looks great and asked how streamlined the list of recommendations must be.
- Matthew Green asked if the format of the report must follow past reports.
- Bernadette Mele responded that their report won't be as extensive and that their report will be shorter. She commented that their report will be more manageable.
- Matthew Green commented on the format of the report and asked what the subgroup will bring to the broader Task Force to consider.
- Bernadette Mele responded that she was looking at a short list of recommendations to bring to the Task Force as bringing too many recommendations will be too much for the Task Force to address in a timely manner.
- Karen Griffiths raised the point of Rep. McCarthy-Vahey of keeping it simple and writing the report for the intended audience.
- Bernadette Mele agreed with that and mentioned speaking of the specifics in the subgroup and they can make it more understandable later as well as commenting that the report won't be if past reports.
- Matthew Green asked if the format would look like the reverse of past reports where this report will have a recommendation then in the body have a layout of what that looks like.
- Bernadette Mele agrees and thinks the format should be recommendation, rationale, and then the benefit. She stated that when the subgroup decides on what they would like to move forward with then they should prioritize what the subgroup wants to put forward and in what order.
- Karen Griffiths asked Bernadette Mele to repeat the format she laid out.
- Bernadette Mele responded that the format should be recommendation, rationale, and then the benefit. She went over the recommendation of creating recognition programs.

- Karen Griffiths agrees with the recommendation of creating recognition programs but asked how they would put this recommendation in the report regarding who would be administering the program.
- Bernadette Mele stated that there are state level programs and asked Matthew Green if he is familiar Magnet Recognition.
- Matthew Green responded that he is aware of one hospital with this program and that is Middlesex.
- Bernadette Mele commented that other hospitals have it as well like Yale.
- Karen Griffiths asked if the recognition was state or national.
- Bernadette Mele responded that she is not sure and that they should research the recommendation. She commented that they could do an incentive program that goes along with being recognized.
- Karen Griffiths asked how it would work logistically and if they would need state funding. She also asked how they would define that and who would decide who gets it.
- Bernadette Mele responded that facilities will have to come up with benchmarks on what determines them to be excellent. She stated that this recommendation is an idea that she isn't married to and brought up the nursing recognition program as an inspiration for this recommendation.
- Karen Griffiths agrees with the idea and likes it. She stated that she was asking her questions for logistics as she was wondering if they should put something in for grant funds. She asked Matthew Green to expand on the nurse recognition program.
- Matthew Green answered that the program is overseen by the American Nurse Credentialing Center (ANCC) and he stated the criteria used as excellent. He added that the ANCC is an independent body that you would try to take magnet status through.
- Karen Griffiths asked if it is a national award that hospitals in Connecticut apply for.
- Matthew Green responded that is correct and added that the hospital must keep their metrics good on an ongoing basis. He answered that the ANCC is a national accredited body.
- Karen Griffiths stated that if they are looking for something at the state level if they would have to go through state organizations or through individual

hospitals.

- Bernadette Mele responded that it would have to go through on the national level as it could assist in the ask for funding.
- Karen Griffiths asked if they possibly would ask for state support for hospitals to meet these benchmarks and stated that they would have to look to see if these benchmarks already exist.
- Bernadette Mele commented that they would have to look at what state grants or state funding is available and add these disciplines to those. She went over another group of recommendations which focused on leveraging HOSA for future health professionals.
- Karen Griffiths agrees with this recommendation as her national organization has been promoting Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) for workforce shortage. She believes that a deeper issue is the lack of health science certified teachers and asked if that is something the state can help coordinate long term. She stated that she had a conversation with someone from state education and they mentioned that there is opportunity at many of these high schools to have this position but there are not enough people with this certification. She doesn't know if it can be put in their report and doesn't know if they should be recommending it. But she believes that it is something long term that must be looked at.
- Bernadette Mele agrees with Karen Griffiths and believes that it should be looked at as a pipeline to the healthcare professions and funding can be used to help to develop health science certified teachers to get more HOSA clubs.
- Karen Griffiths agrees with the rest of the recommendations as it would help create more pathways to learn about different healthcare programs.
- Bernadette Mele went over a group of recommendations regarding leveraging the Connecticut Health Foundation (CHF) by partnering with CHF for a stronger workforce.
- Karen Griffiths stated most hospitals charge for respiratory therapy clinical instruction and it is a barrier as the fee is expensive.
- Bernadette Mele in addition went over recommendations leveraging the Connecticut Health Horizons Grant by expanding the grant. She also went over leveraging the Connecticut Student Loan Repayment Program which would strengthen loan repayment options for students. She added that it's about the cost of education and the cost to live in Connecticut. Another group of recommendations is leveraging national programs and professional

association support as well as leveraging institutional and private foundation support.

- Karen Griffiths asked if the scholarships would make a big impact on the shortage or will it have a smaller impact.
- Bernadette Mele answered that it would be creating a tax incentive to healthcare facilities to make trainings for these smaller fields and that it would depend.
- Karen Griffiths asked if it would be up to the student to find those scholarships.
- Bernadette Mele responded that if they were to work at a facility that facility could have a benefit incentive to attract them.
- Karen Griffiths stated that it could possibly be used at career fairs to attract potential staff.
- Bernadette Mele stated that it is like a sign on bonus but in a different way. She went over the public health impact and the final call to action.
- Karen Griffiths believes that the final report should include the impact that the shortage will have on the people of Connecticut who are seeking care. She commented that she liked the format that was discussed previously.
- Matthew Green agrees and believes that the report should try to tell a story.
- Karen Griffiths agrees about trying to tell a story and reiterated Rep. McCarthy-Vahey's point of knowing the audience to whom the report is written for. She suggested that each of them should write a piece for their own profession that would include information about the profession, why it is so important, what the impact of the shortage is, and maybe current numbers.
- Bernadette Mele agrees and believes that it would be helpful as well as mentioning that the Task Force will meet on November 20th. She added that they should work on the narrative for each profession as well as having a vote on the recommendations so they know what will be in the final report.
- Karen Griffiths suggested having a conversation on what they feel like should be in the report.
- Bernadette Mele stated that she put forward the recommendations regarding loan repayment, tax incentives for technologists or facilities, funding for education program expansion.

- Karen Griffiths and Matthew Green agree with the loan repayment recommendation.
- Bernadette Mele stated that they will add a little bit more information under loan repayment recommendation that would give them the ability to talk about the rationale.
- Karen Griffiths stated that they could include the Horizons Grant and providing tuition assistance for students who can't afford it. She added that loan forgiveness was passed this summer for several professions not including allied health.
- Bernadette Mele stated that it is a loan repayment program to include allied health professionals.
- Karen Griffiths stated that including all allied health professionals might be too broad and they could include the modalities on the Task Force.
- Bernadette Mele asked if those recommendations are appropriate to bring to the full Task Force.
- Karen Griffiths and Matthew Green agreed.
- Bernadette Mele asked if the recommendation of tax incentives is okay to bring to the full Task Force.
- Karen Griffiths expressed that she doesn't understand what they are looking for with this recommendation.
- Bernadette Mele explained that they are looking to ask clinical sites to accept more students but there are factors that inhibit that and providing facilities subsidies or tax breaks can allow them to take on more students. She doesn't know the logistics of the ask and stated that they can use the recognition programs to leverage the funding.
- Karen Griffiths commented that she was saying something similar with the grant money as they can use grant money to incentivize facilities to be able to assist with various programs that can take more students. She stated that tax incentives could be helpful but doesn't know the logistics behind that. She added that for the Horizons Grant there was a component under there that had grant money for clinical partnerships. She emphasized that each profession has different needs so different funding will have to be researched. She isn't against tax incentives; she just doesn't understand it enough to know how to write the ask in the report. She asked if they should delineate the different funding streams for each recommendation.

- Bernadette Mele responded that they can separate grants and tax incentives.
- Matthew Green stated that he agrees with Karen Griffiths as he doesn't have enough knowledge about tax incentives as to know how to write the ask.
- Bernadette Mele stated that the tax incentives could be for the practitioners, not the facilities.
- Matthew Green asked if programs would be included.
- Bernadette Mele agreed.
- Matthew Green added that it is about supporting programs to get students in.
- Bernadette Mele added that there is a growing field of PET CT and PET MR nuclear medicine technologists, and she heard that there is not enough of those technologists.
- Karen Griffiths asked why nuclear radiology wouldn't be with the radiologic technologist program.
- Bernadette Mele stated that nuclear medicine is its own entity so you can be a nuclear medicine technologist without being a radiologic technologist.
- Matthew Green stated that the typical pathway is becoming an X-Ray technologist then branching out into the imaging world into the specific pocket of nuclear medicine. He stated that there are multiple pathways to becoming a nuclear medicine technologist.
- Karen Griffiths asked if there is a pathway for a radiologic technologist to become a nuclear medicine technologist.
- Bernadette Mele answered that is a pathway.
- Karen Griffiths asked if it could also be a standalone degree.
- Bernadette Mele and Matthew Green answered that is correct.
- Bernadette Mele stated that looking at the list of funding to help educational program expansions is something else they can discuss and asked them if that is acceptable.
- Matthew Green and Karen Griffiths agreed.
- Bernadette Mele asked them about their thoughts about the recommendation

regarding streamlined licensing for out of state professionals.

- Karen Griffiths responded that when she talked to the Respiratory Therapy Board, they felt that they were addressing that in other ways. They are pushing for an interstate compact but don't know if it is something that they need legislative support for at this point. They feel that a compact would be helpful for the border regions.
- Matthew Green agrees that it would be good for the border regions but doesn't see many out- of- staters as a hiring manager and doesn't know the usefulness of a compact. He stated that he sees compacts for nursing and other professions are mainly for travelers. He would like to see the state focus more on education and infrastructure. He is not against streamlined licensing but believes that the state should focus more long term.
- Karen Griffiths added that when she sent out a poll to program directors and hospital directors, they mainly asked for a compact licensure agreement around the border regions. She believes that it could be helpful and that the Task Force is addressing the issue through a different lens. If the Task Force can make a limited number of recommendations, a compact would not be one, and she stated that they are addressing it through different avenues. She would not be against it if there was a member who strongly was advocating for it.
- Matthew Green agrees.
- Bernadette Mele asked about recruitment campaigns for imaging and respiratory fields.
- Matthew Green and Karen Griffiths agree.
- Bernadette Mele asked that they are only leaning away from streamlined licensing.
- Karen Griffiths emphasized that it is important just not a priority to help in alleviating the shortage.
- Bernadette Mele stated that it will be at the bottom of the recommendations for the Task Force to consider.
- Karen Griffiths added that she is not sure if they would need grant money as she is not sure if it should be a legislative support ask or just about having a discussion.
- Bernadette Mele asked if they agree with the recommendation of Loan Repayment and Scholarship Program where they will discuss the CT

Horizon's Grant and the Connecticut Student Loan Repayment Program. She asked if there are other programs or fundings streams they should include.

- Matthew Green stated that they should include existing entities that they can leverage to expand to include the Task Force's modalities.
- Karen Griffiths added that she heard that nursing is in the process of moving forward with the next phase of the Horizon's Grant. She asked if Connecticut Health Foundation would help in loan repayment.
- Bernadette Mele stated that they can help with funding, advocacy or any support for programs.
- Karen Griffiths asked if in nursing the Horizon's Grant is doing that to get funding.
- Matthew Green stated that his understanding is that it is through the institutions that hook you up with this. As for the grant there is a cap for each institution per year. He added that it is just like receiving a list of financial aid. Horizons would be on the list.
- Karen Griffiths asked if they need to specify that funding has to go through these specific institutions or organizations.
- Bernadette Mele responded that they can talk about existing programs and how they can be further expanded. She asked if they agree with that.
- Matthew Green and Karen Griffiths agree.
- Bernadette Mele asked if they should include national organizations or professional organizations.
- Karen Griffiths opposes that idea as she doesn't know how logistically that would work. She stated that they already partner with their professional organizations and doesn't know if recommending that will change anything.
- Matthew Green believes that it is a nice avenue, and it is like the Horizon's program where they can use it as an existing model to convince legislators for support.
- Bernadette Mele asked if student loan repayment should be separated from scholarships.
- Matthew Green agrees.

- Karen Griffiths believes that student loans and tuition assistance should be one and loan forgiveness is two. She states that it can be included in one line and that student loans (tuition assistance) would be like Horizon's. Loan forgiveness would be what the Governor passed this summer for other professions and expanding that loan forgiveness to include the Task Force's modalities. She believes that it will be fine to separate them.
- Bernadette Mele asked about how the recommendation of grant funding will be brought forward.
- Karen Griffiths responded that she made that recommendation by looking at the Horizon's initiative and they had a bucket called grant funding that had different things. One of those things was partnerships between educational programs and health facilities, she believes that recommendation would be helpful for all their professions.
- Bernadette Mele asked if the recommendation should be an overarching one where they leverage the Connecticut Horizon's Grant in order to include these three professions and then rationalize that.
- Karen Griffiths disagrees with that as the Horizon Grant lasts from 2022-2025. She stated that they should create their own program that is modeled after Horizons.
- Bernadette Mele asked about the social worker component.
- Karen Griffiths answered that both programs came out at the same time and asked if they agree with that.
- Bernadette Mele stated that it should say the Connecticut Horizon's Grant.
- Karen Griffiths added that it would be different from the loan forgiveness piece. She asked them if the members agree with that.
- Bernadette Mele and Matthew Green agree.
- Bernadette Mele asked if they agree with recommendations regarding recruitment efforts and a compact licensure. She asked if they would like to include any additional recommendations.
- Karen Griffiths stated that it should be kept short that will help all their professions.
- Bernadette Mele stated that they will present these five recommendations to the full Task Force, and they will need to prepare a rationale for each. They can talk about the recommendations in whole not individually.

- Karen Griffiths asked Bernadette Mele if she would like to be sent recommendations and the narrative.
- Bernadette Mele responded that it is just the recommendations and told them to hold onto the narrative that they will write for their own profession. She told them to send anything to the administrative staff.
- Karen Griffiths clarified what she will need to do.
- Matthew Green asked if they discussed the HOSA recommendation.
- Bernadette Mele stated that the HOSA recommendation will go under recruitment efforts. She stated that the agenda will include what will be under each recommendation.
- Matthew Green thanked Bernadette Mele and stated that the report will look like a narrative summarizing the problem. The first recommendation would be recruitment efforts. Second would be expanding programs to accept new students which would include loan creation, loan forgiveness, and grant money.
- Bernadette Mele responded that is how she hopes the final report will be presented.
- Karen Griffiths asked for clarification of the five recommendations listed. One would be student loans (tuition assistance), two would be loan forgiveness, three would be grant money, four would be recruitment and five would be compact licensure. She asked if they should be using the term of compact licensure.
- Bernadette Mele responded that she will query for other terms.
- Karen Griffiths and Matthew Green thanked Bernadette Mele.
- Bernadette Mele asked if they have any other questions or comments.
- Karen Griffiths commented that she appreciated the subgroup.
- Bernadette Mele agrees and believes that they touched on the most important things.
- Karen Griffiths suggested having another subgroup meeting after the full Task Force meeting.
- Bernadette Mele stated that she will look for dates and times.

- Karen Griffiths stated that they don't have to decide now and can wait until the full Task Force meeting.
- Bernadette Mele believes that they are in good shape but will look for additional dates and times.

III. Draft Report Preparation

IV. Adjournment

- The meeting adjourned at 2:46 PM.