

**Testimony of the Connecticut Society of Respiratory Care**

**Submitted to the Public Health Committee**

**March 22, 2023**

**Senate Bill 1228**

**An Act Concerning the State's Health Care Workforce**

Senator Anwar, Representative McCarthy Vahey and distinguished members of the public health committee.

The CT Society for Respiratory Care (CTSRC) appreciates this opportunity to provide testimony concerning Senate Bill 1228, An Act Concerning the State's Health Care Workforce.

The CTSRC is the professional organization that represents Respiratory Care Practitioners (more commonly known as Respiratory Therapists) practicing in the state of CT. There are over 1800 licensed Respiratory Care Practitioners living and practicing here. We are an integral part of the health care team in both inpatient, outpatient and homecare settings and are important contributors to the economic landscape of CT as taxpayers and consumers.

The workforce shortage existed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic but the pandemic has impacted our workforce even more and our current numbers are insufficient to support this need.

In addition to the impact of the pandemic, the CTSRC believes that the workforce shortage is also the result of the lack of public knowledge of the profession, the aging workforce, the rising rate of burn-out in our ranks, and the need for a more robust pipeline of students who are interested in the profession. Nationwide, there has been a decrease in enrollment of students in Respiratory Care programs resulting in a decrease of new graduates to our profession<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, retention of students enrolled in the state's programs is a challenge for our educators. Students enrolled in our programs need more educational support such as tutoring, financial assistance, and more clinical learning opportunities. It is for these reasons, the CTSRC supports the spirit of **section 1 of SB 1228**, however, we respectfully recommend that the language in section 1(2) be amended as follows: **complete a curriculum designed to prepare such student for higher education in pre-medicine, nursing, and other health care professions.**

This workforce shortage must be addressed on multiple levels therefore the **CTSRC fully supports Section 2 of SB 1228** and stands ready to work with the Commissioner of Public Health to study methods and assist in developing a plan to address the shortage of Respiratory Therapists in our state. The CTSRC appreciates the Department of Public Health's effort to bring this issue forward to our legislators and we see this as a tremendous opportunity for the State of Connecticut, our employers, educators, and health care professionals to work together to address the needs of our health care workforce.

Finally, **Section 5 of SB 1228** refers to studying the feasibility of offering competency testing for dental assistants, phlebotomists, electrocardiography technicians and respiratory care practitioners. As mentioned previously, Respiratory Therapists are licensed by the state of CT. We are required to complete stringent educational requirements in order to sit for our national credentialing examinations. According to current state statutes, those who wish to obtain an RCP license must take and pass these

examinations. This process is similar to other health care professionals such as nurses. In addition to credentialing exams, we are required by state statute to obtain 10 continuing education units annually of which half must be live programs. Furthermore, the National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC) requires all RTs who received their credential beginning in July 2002 to participate in the [Credential Maintenance Program](#) which requires these RTs to demonstrate continued competency<sup>2</sup>. Given that RTs practicing today have licensure, CEU requirements and a national credential maintenance program, the CTSRC respectfully requests that our profession be removed from this section.

Thank you for your consideration of our position on SB 1228. We look forward to assisting in this very important work.

References:

1. Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care; [2020 Report on Accreditation in Respiratory Care Education](#).
2. National Board for Respiratory Care Credential Maintenance Program; <https://www.nbrc.org/credentialed-practitioners/#credential-maintenance>