



HOUSE HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES AND ELDERLY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

January 24, 2019

HB 509 – Relative to A Graduate Physician Pilot Program

Testimony

Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the committee. My name is Paula Minnehan, VP, State Government Relations with the New Hampshire Hospital Association (NHHA), representing all 26 of the state's community hospitals as well as all specialty hospitals.

The NHHA is opposed to HB 509. While we appreciate the sponsor (and cosponsor's) efforts to address a healthcare workforce shortage in NH, we have major concerns with the legislation before you. As some of the committee members will recall, a very similar bill was introduced last session. That bill was not a pilot but had many of the provisions that are in the bill before you this year. Originally the title of the bill (and program contemplated) was "regulation of assistant physicians". The bill was amended when it passed the House and the title was changed to "graduate physician". The bill did not pass the Senate.

Our concerns remain as follows:

- Allowing medical school graduates to practice medicine without completing medical training through an accredited residency program could jeopardize patient safety because they are still inexperienced in a patient care setting.
- All hospitals in NH, including our rural areas, maintain the highest standards of certification and accreditation and they are not interested in lowering those standards by having individuals without proper medical training work in their facilities. In fact, when asked, the CEOs of our rural Critical Access Hospitals were shocked to learn that the focus of the bill was to encourage these medical school graduates to work in their facilities.
- There is a reason why medical school graduates do not match into a residency program. Medical schools work very hard to ensure that all their graduates match with a residency program of the student's chosen specialty. Unfortunately, the match is not always successful initially. Studies have shown, however, that the vast majority of all medical students successfully match with a residency program within a couple years of graduating from medical school.

- While HB 509 attempts to address the issue of reimbursement (at least by Medicaid and Medicare) that many stakeholders raised last year, there remain questions of reimbursement by group health insurance carriers.
- Furthermore, malpractice insurance carriers in Missouri (the only other state where this law was passed) are not willing to provide malpractice insurance to these individuals. Why would their policies be any different in NH? Hospitals require that any individual providing medical care to their patients be covered by malpractice insurance.
- Accredited residency programs are highly structured to provide a well-rounded and rigorous clinical and educational experience for medical school graduates. We believe the focus should be on encouraging (and funding) more accredited residency programs in NH. In fact, since this bill was last considered by this committee, we have a new residency program starting at Portsmouth Regional Hospital.
- Programs like the State Loan Repayment Program (SLRP) is a perfect example of a successful program that assists in addressing the health care workforce shortage. The current limitation of that program is one of funding. There is currently a bill in the Senate (sponsored by Senator Rosenwald and many cosponsors, including some members of this committee) that does increase funding substantially for the SLRP. We are hopeful that the bill will pass, and we can recruit and retain talented health care providers to treat NH citizens.
- There are significant requirements in the legislation that fall to the Board of Medicine regarding promulgating rules and oversight. It is unclear to us if the Board of Medicine has the resources to assume this regulatory burden and oversight. While there is a FN on the bill it appears that Office of Professional Licensure and Certification (OPLC) was unable to determine the true financial impact of the bill.

For these reasons, NHHA cannot support HB 509 and we ask that you find the bill inexpedient to legislate.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments. I am happy to answer any questions.