



NH Health Care Quality
Assurance Commission

Senate EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION Committee

January 23, 2019

SB 26 - Relative to The New Hampshire Health Care Quality Assurance Commission

Testimony

Good morning Madam Chair and Committee members:

My name is Anne Diefendorf and I am the VP Patient Safety and Quality / Associate Executive Director of the Foundation for Healthy Communities. I am here to testify in support of SB 26 – specifically to endorse its name change, membership expansion and creating it as a permanent Commission for NH.

I am uniquely positioned to testify in that I am the only person who has participated in all 67 meetings that have occurred over the past fourteen years. I had the privilege of representing Concord Hospital as an original member for six years, beginning with the 1st meeting of the Commission in September of 2005. In my current role at the Foundation, I have served as the Administrator of the New Hampshire Health Care Quality Assurance Commission for the past eight years.

During this fourteen-year span, representatives from every hospital and ambulatory surgery center in New Hampshire have met regularly to share information about medical harms and how to prevent them. Our primary focus has been on how to improve the quality and safety of health care for the citizens of New Hampshire. Through our combined efforts we have had enormous success in implementing statewide patient safety programs at our facilities and achieving measurable improvement in adopting processes which are known to prevent harm to patients.

There are many reasons why the Commission has been so successful. It serves as a forum for sharing evidence based best practices, fostering a culture of safety that embraces high reliability concepts and challenging each other to continually improve the systems we know as “health care”. The statute protects the information being communicated under the auspices of the Commission to be confidential and privileged. This has fostered the candor, self critical analysis, and trust necessary in creating the learning environment we now have to promote better and safer care for patients in our state. We are passionate about this work as evidenced by the consistent attendance at every meeting and voluntary commitment by providers to the numerous patient safety initiatives we have undertaken.

The Commission members are steadfast in their commitment to provide better and safer care and understand that the Commission continues to evolve and mature as a learning organization. Several significant events and issues have been shared and found a home to generate action in the Commission. This ranges from issues receiving worldwide attention such as the Ebola outbreak to those closer to home such as the transmission of hepatitis due to drug diversion. These events have helped reinforce principles of infection prevention and resulted in implementation of new practices of detection and prevention of drug diversion. Efforts have been standardized and best practices exemplified through the Commission activity. More recently our focus has expanded to issues of public health – through our focus on appropriate use of antibiotics; to workplace safety – through our focus on assaults against health care workers; and to stemming the opioid crisis – through sound prescribing practices and safe disposal of unused narcotics. The proposed name change helps to capture the breadth of our activities.

We believe our work has demonstrated the need to make this Commission permanent. We also support the addition of our specialty hospitals to our membership. Since the last repeal of the Commission sunset, we have welcomed additional public members. One of them joins me today. I would like you to meet Sara Kellogg Meade. She serves as the ‘voice of the patient’ and validates the important work that is being carried out by providers in the state.

I urge you to support SB26. We are happy to answer any questions.

Thank you.