

SEAN SCANLON
STATE COMPTROLLER



TARA DOWNES
DEPUTY COMPTROLLER



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE of the STATE COMPTROLLER
165 Capitol Ave.
Hartford, CT 06106

Testimony in support of:

SB 1450: An Act Concerning Recruitment and Retention of the Health Care Workforce

Senator Anwar, Representative McCarthy Vahey, Senator Somers, Representative Klarides-Ditria, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee:

Thank you for raising and affording me the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 1450: An Act Concerning Recruitment and Retention of the Health Care Workforce.

The bill before you today would require the Department of Public Health (DPH) to establish a health care provider loan reimbursement program for providers who work full time in our state. Under this bill, DPH would also be mandated to allocate at least 20% of loan reimbursements toward full time Primary Care Providers (PCPs) and 20% for providers who work in rural areas or Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) which are both underserved.

Throughout 2023 and 2024, my office convened a “Healthcare Cabinet,” which brought key policymakers, stakeholders, practitioners, and advocates together to discuss healthcare challenges facing various demographic populations across Connecticut. The cabinet was made up of subcommittees based on those population groups who sought solutions to these challenges, which include potential legislation or restructuring current efforts.

Providing loan reimbursements for healthcare providers was a recommendation that was shared by multiple subcommittees. Our Workforce Subcommittee called for a reimbursement program to help talented individuals to stay in the healthcare profession. Likewise, the Urban Equity and Disparities Subcommittee called for targeted workforce development in medically underserved areas which this bill emphasizes with its rural/FQHC reimbursement quotas. Finally, our Rural Health Care Subcommittee advocated for loan reimbursements to healthcare providers who work in a rural area. With such a broad consensus, it is clear that the Healthcare Cabinet is in full support of this bill.

Creating a loan reimbursement program for full time healthcare providers would provide an immense public benefit that would outweigh its costs. Connecticut is currently facing a widespread healthcare provider shortage. An analysis done by the Governor’s Workforce Council in 2020 found that the state has an average annual deficit of 1,000 graduating nurses and 2,500 CNAs. The rising cost of tuition only adds to this shortage as people across the state are dissuaded from carrying a large debt burden. For example, the American Student Dental Association found that graduating dental students carried an average student loan balance of

\$293,000 in 2022. Likewise, data collected by the Association of American Medical Colleges from 2008-2017 showed that our state on average is only able to retain 41.7% of physicians who have their residency in Connecticut. The sum of these factors amounts to the state being placed in a tenuous position where healthcare costs continue to rise, and demand has soared since the pandemic. Clearly, more attention needs to be given to recruiting and retaining our state's healthcare workers.

By passing SB 1450, we will send a strong message to our state's healthcare workers that their government values their contributions and will do everything it can to support their work. Creating a loan reimbursement program will retain our current healthcare workers while also helping to recruit even more of them.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 1450. I look forward to working with members of the committee on this issue this session.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sean Scanlon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sean" being more prominent than the last name "Scanlon".

Sean Scanlon

State Comptroller