

To: Representative Jim Morrison, Chair, House Health and Human Services Committee

From: Joan Felts, Chair, Kansas Committee for Nursing Education and Practice (KNEP)

Re: Support of HB 2813

Date: February 24, 2006

KNEP, a Committee of the Kansas Organization of Nurse Leaders, is pleased to present testimony in support of HB 2813. KNEP is a twelve-member committee, six of whom represent nursing practice in Kansas, and six represent nursing education in Kansas.

We strongly support the elimination of statement (o) in statute 65-1124 that allows nursing graduates of accredited schools to practice as registered professional nurses for 120 days before they become licensed. This recommendation is preceded by a study of the issue since 2003 and is based on the following statements:

- To ensure public protection, each state requires candidates for licensure to pass an examination, National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN), which measures the competencies needed to perform safely and effectively as a newly licensed, entry-level registered nurse. The 120 day time period that Kansas currently allows does not ensure the public that the new graduate has demonstrated those competencies according to a nationally recognized standard.
- The current 120 day time period in the statute is based on a time frame in place before technology enabled graduates to take the NCLEX and receive a license within several weeks after graduation.
- The emphasis on patient safety in the health care field calls for validation of the ability to demonstrate safe practice.
- Data reviewed from eleven states that require a license before practice evidenced a mean pass rate above the national average.
- Both Kansas and national data verify that graduates who take the NCLEX-RN earlier in the 120-day time frame have a better pass rate than those who test later.
- The nursing practice members of K-NEP emphasize the cost savings for hospitals that orient new graduates who are licensed instead of orienting graduates who are not licensed and who fail the NCLEX. Additionally, orientation of a new graduate who fails the NCLEX in the 120-time period and subsequently not able to work in the position hired for exacerbates the already difficult professional nurse staffing situation.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2813. KNEP believes that changing the statute to require a license before practice is in the best interest of patients, graduates and the economics of health care.

