

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

From: Karen Gibson RN, BSN, MSN

Date: February 23, 2006

My name is Karen Gibson, Vice President of Nursing for Via Christi Regional Medical Center in Wichita, KS and I am pleased to present testimony in support of HB 2813.

I 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.

The rationale is as follows:

The national nursing licensure examination for registered professional nurses, NCLEX-RN, measures minimal competency and the hospital is assured that the individual who is caring for patients has met a national standard and is licensed to practice.

The medical and pharmacy professions require a license before practice.

The time required to obtain the NCLEX-RN test results has been dramatically reduced because of technology and nursing graduates no longer need the extended time period to become licensed.

The neighboring states of Oklahoma, Colorado and Nebraska require a license before practice for graduate nurses.

All new graduates are given an extensive orientation. Graduates who fail the NCLEX in that 120 day period cannot continue in the graduate status and must work in an ancillary capacity until licensed. Costs for orienting a new graduate range from \$25,000 to \$32,000, depending upon how costs are calculated. These are nursing costs only and do not reflect Human Resources and other associated costs. In addition to the costs, the loss of a potential nurse until the NCLEX can be retaken complicates an already difficult staffing situation.

According to the Kansas State Board of Nursing, the passing rate of Kansas nursing graduates seeking an RN license from 2000 to 2004 ranged from 78% to 87%. This is a significant statistic number for our health care system because we employ approximately 110 new graduates each year, resulting in a cost to the system of approximately \$560,000 for those who do not initially pass the NCLEX.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2813. I believe that changing the statute so that new graduates will have to be licensed before employment will be in the best interests of the graduates, the hospitals, and the patients.

