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**TESTIMONY OF THE NURSING HOME ADMINISTRATOR EXAMINING
BOARD ON SB 299**

Before the Committee on Health, Utilities, Veterans and Military Affairs

January 26, 2000

Good afternoon. I am Karen Robinson, Chair of the Nursing Home Administrator Examining Board, and I am here on behalf of the Board to testify and urge your support of Senate Bill 299 which will raise the bar for educational and experience requirements for Nursing Home Administrators. SB 299 will require applicants for the N.H.A. exam to have completed a Bachelor, a Masters or Doctoral degree with a major in health care administration or a Bachelor's degree in any field with a specialized course and 2000 hours of internship or an administrator-in-training program.

The Bill also will require persons seeking a reciprocal license to pass the state exam, to have a Bachelor's degree, and to have practiced in their state for 2000 hours in good standing.

Currently, we are only 1 of 13 states that require less than a Bachelor's degree for licensing Nursing Home Administrators.

As you are well aware, nursing facilities under the direction of Nursing Home Administrators have a growing significant impact on the lives of our aging population. Approximately 45,000 individuals are served each day in Wisconsin nursing homes. A large volume of knowledge is required of Nursing Home Administrators to safely and effectively manage nursing and rehab practice, employment issues, federal and state laws and regulations pertaining to care, licensing and payment programs and general business practice.

The Nursing Home Administrator Examining Board urges you to support this very timely and necessary bill. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

Regulatory Boards

Accounting; Architects, Landscape Architects, Professional Engineers, Designers and Land Surveyors; Professional Geologists, Hydrologists and Soil Scientists; Auctioneer; Barbering and Cosmetology; Chiropractic; Controlled Substances; Dentistry; Dietitians; Funeral Directors; Hearing and Speech; Medical; Nursing; Nursing Home Administrator; Optometry; Pharmacy; Physical Therapists; Podiatry; Psychology; Real Estate; Real Estate Appraisers; Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists and Professional Counselors; and Veterinary.

Senate Bill 299 – Your bill at the request of Karen Robinson.

Requires persons taking the nursing home administrator license examination to have either 1) a bachelors, masters, or doctoral degree in health care administration or long-term care degree, or 2) a bachelors degree in any field and completion of a specialized course in nursing home administration. The bill also establishes minimum experience requirements for nursing home administrators and directs the Nursing Home Administrator Examining Board to develop rules governing experience standards for nursing home administrators.

The bill allows the board to grant reciprocal licenses to currently certified nursing home administrators. According to the Nursing Home Administrators Examining Board, Wisconsin is only one of thirteen states that does not require nursing home administrators to have a bachelors degree.

TO: WHCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

FROM: Tom Moore
Executive Committee

RE: Nursing Home Administrator License Requirements

DATE: August 12, 1999

At its August 24th meeting, the Board will be asked to advance a position on the attached legislative bill draft which proposes statutory and regulatory changes in educational and practical experience prerequisites for taking the nursing home administrator license examination. It basically requires that a person must either have:

- (1) a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree with a health care administration or long-term care major, or
- (2) a bachelor's degree and completion of a specialized course in nursing home administration.

It also requires that a person complete at least 2000 hours of supervised practical experience before they would be allowed to take the examination. It directs the Nursing Home Administrator Licensure Board to develop administrative rules to define acceptable practical experience standards.

Wisconsin is apparently one of only 13 states that do not require an individual to have a bachelors degree to qualify for administrator licensure. The proposed legislation would provide grandfather protection to persons currently licensed who do not possess a bachelors degree.

Karen Robinson, Vice Chair of the NHA Examining Board will attend our August Board Meeting and entertain questions the board you may have regarding the legislation. The proposal has the unanimous support of the Examining Board.

January 26, 2000

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee on Health, Utilities, Veterans and Military Affairs:

I write to you today to provide additional information as you consider S.B.299. I teach in the area of healthcare quality management and in that field there is the educational story of how during World War II engineers were trying to determine where to place additional armor to protect bombers from flak. Because of weight limitations, they could not increase the armor everywhere on the plane, so the question was, "Where do we put the extra armor?" An enterprising soul came up with the idea to look at the flak damage patterns on the returning bombers and to mark up a picture of the bomber where the flak damage was located. Sure enough, patterns soon emerged where there were areas of considerable flak damage on the plane and areas where there was practically none. The engineers, of course, soon recommended that the additional armor be placed where there was *no damage* on the returning planes. The deduction was simply that planes that were hit in these areas did not survive and it was obvious that planes hit in the other areas did return!

With S.B. 299 you are being asked to use similar deductive logic. With annual turnover approaching 30%, few positions today suffer the amount of flak as does the position of nursing home administrator (1). Unfortunately, research is establishing that employment stability of nursing home administrators is a significant factor in the quality of care received by nursing home residents (2). This research suggests that our parents and grandparents suffer when the field of nursing home administration becomes an arena for the survival of only the fittest.

Remember "survival of the fittest" as you debate the baseline educational requirements of the nursing home administrator. You will look out in the field and see successful administrators with all categories of education and experience. We may learn little from these individuals directly because these administrators are like the returning bombers that were well designed, or have made their own modifications, or have been lucky. The important question is, however, how many from each educational category are no longer practicing nursing home administration; how many were shot down? Consider the reduction in the quality of care for residents made as men and women found themselves ill prepared for the rigors of nursing home administration.

We face the same problem as those World War II engineers; it is difficult to directly study those who are not successful. However, we do know that nearly three quarters of the other states now require a bachelor's degree (3). This is where these states are putting their armor in the protection of their nursing home residents. Implicit in these decisions is the idea that the bachelor's degree is the minimum amount of educational armor needed by most individuals to have a decent chance in surviving the flak aimed at nursing home administrators.

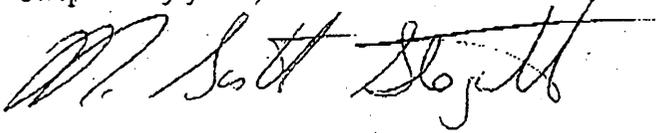
(1) Singh, D. and R. Schwab. (1998). "Retention of Administrators in Nursing Homes: What Can Management Do?" *The Gerontologist*, 38(3), 362-369.

(2) Singh, D. (1997). *Nursing home administrators: Their influence on quality of care*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.

(3) See the website of the American College of Health Care Administrators at: www.achca.org/statelic/index.html.

S.B. 299 aligns Wisconsin with these evolving national standards.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "M. Scott Stegall". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

M. Scott Stegall, MHSA, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Health Care Administration and Informatics Program