

David Gordon, M.D.
 Dean, School of Health Professions and Studies
 University of Michigan-Flint

Testimony before the Senate Education Committee concerning HB 4496
 January 25, 2012

Myths and realities about HB 4496:

Many people may be mistakenly inclined to vote for HB 4496 thinking that this legislation will lead to an increase in highly qualified nurses in the State of Michigan. The realities however are quite different as summarized below:

- a. ***Myth:*** *This bill will produce more nurses.* ***Fact:*** This bill will at best promote further training of existing nurses, not increase the overall number of nurses. Waiting lists for nursing training are likely to remain the same, since this does not enhance the capacity to train nurses all along the nursing pipeline.
- b. ***Myth:*** *This bill will produce higher quality nurses capable of providing higher quality and safer care.* ***Fact:*** If the programs proposed are not accredited by a professional body of professional nurses, then this is unlikely to occur. Such accreditation is expensive and requires faculty with advanced, terminal academic degrees (e.g. Ph.D. trained).
- c. ***Myth:*** *This bill will save cost (e.g. lower tuition).* ***Fact:*** In order to enable appropriate accreditation, hiring of advanced degree faculty, and probably bolstering clinical training venues, this will entail increased expenses, which may have to be addressed by increases in tuition and fees, or State appropriations, or increases in local community college mileages thus costing the local taxpayers more out of their pocket.
- d. ***Myth:*** This bill will give community college students access to bachelor of science in nursing (BSN) training. ***Fact:*** Our University and others throughout Michigan already have active articulation agreements with various community colleges, specifically to allow such students to transfer to get BSN degrees.

If one really wanted to increase the number of highly qualified nurses in the State of Michigan, one would need to build greater training capacity for students seeking the BSN degree. Evidence for this lack of training capacity is the presence of long waiting lists for individuals even seeking registered nurse (RN) training at many of our existing community colleges. Increasing such capacity would entail:

1. Addressing the critical shortage of nursing faculty, by recruiting and training such individuals with advanced terminal academic degrees (e.g. Ph.D. degrees).
2. Providing loan repayment and other incentives to encourage individuals to become nursing faculty (vs. practicing as nurses in healthcare organizations where they usually earn significantly higher salaries).
3. Establishing increased clinical training sites for nursing.

4. **Providing more convenient learning opportunities (e.g. online and distance learning venues which are actually already being offered by several Universities).**
5. **Increased funding (either from tuition and/or State funding) to enable the growth of these training resources.** Nursing schools lack the additional funding it takes to expand their programs in order to hire additional full-time or part-time faculty needed to accept more students, pay for clinical supervision, purchase additional equipment, materials, software and supplies.
6. **Increased financial assistance to nursing students.** Making additional aid available to students, whether it be increasing scholarship opportunities or loan-repayment opportunities, would encourage more students to seek full-time enrollment and complete their requirements in a timely manner so they can get into the workforce faster (vs. trying to complete training while often at the same time working at jobs just to make financial ends meet).

Note: None of the above recommendations for increasing the number of highly qualified nurses is addressed directly by HB 4496.