

Bill# S0294/A02480

Educational Advancement of the Nursing Profession

Bills # S0294 & A02480 propose to amend Education Law to *permit future RN applicants who have completed an associate degree or diploma in nursing to continue to receive licensure as an RN but requires such persons to obtain a baccalaureate degree in nursing within 10 years of initial licensure*. Major provisions of the bills include:

- Grandparenting of all currently licensed Registered Nurses (RNs) to **exempt** them from ever having to meet the requirements of the bill;
- Time to permit all students enrolled in associate or diploma programs, including those wait listed, at the date of the bill's passage, to complete their studies and be grandparented and thus **exempt** from ever having to meet the bill's requirements;
- Provisions that would place a Registered Nurse's license on "hold" when the baccalaureate degree is not obtained in 10 years. This "hold" is similar to the action taken when a licensee fails to meet continuing education requirements in those professions that mandate continuing education as a criterion for continued registration;
- Opportunity for an extension beyond 10 years, for extenuating circumstances, as determined by the Department.

Given these provisions, if this proposal were passed by the legislature and signed by the Governor in 2007, the earliest that a licensee would be placed on "hold" would be 2019. This is truly a vision for the future—a vision that seeks to provide the highest quality of nursing care to the residents of New York State. Passage would not intensify the current nursing shortage.

This bill recognizes the diploma and associate degree in nursing as important entry points for many into the profession; that diploma and associate degree nursing education are academically demanding and clinically challenging courses of study; and that the abilities of diploma and associate degree nursing graduates are demonstrated in high NCLEX pass rates and excellent feedback from employers. As superb as such graduates are, the bill recognizes that additional education makes a difference in the skill and competence of nurses, just as it does for other health professionals. By maintaining diploma and associate degree entry, the bill provides a reasonable compromise that precludes many of the more radical plans for educational standardization being proposed by other countries, states, and agencies. Given the enhancements to articulation between associate and baccalaureate nursing programs and the ever-increasing options for advanced placement and distance learning, this proposal can be implemented without disadvantaging future new graduates. Shorter lengths of stays, higher patient acuity, and more sophisticated technologies and procedures are increasing the complexity of patient care—which in turn places greater demands on nursing competencies. Nurses require a strong knowledge base in liberal arts and sciences as well as advanced clinical, analytical and interpersonal skills in order to practice safely in the increasingly complex, highly technological, and culturally diverse health care community. This bill seeks to further expand the strengths of future associate degree and diploma prepared nurses to meet the ever increasingly complex health care needs of New York's residents in the 21st Century.