



Testimony of  
**Andrea Riley**

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Certificate of Need (CON) Taskforce  
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My name is Andrea Riley. I have worked as a nurse in the one-day surgery unit at the hospital for 15 years. I'm also the secretary for the Federation of Windham Hospital Registered Nurses, AFT Local 5041.

Underscoring what my colleague Heather just stated, we believe a stronger Certificate of Need process will become even more urgent if our union loses current contract provisions that give us a right to negotiate over changes or cutbacks in services and jobs at our hospital.

As you know, Windham's critical care unit was eliminated last fall. Hartford HealthCare moved to a "progressive care unit," or PCU, at Windham, but a PCU just can't offer the same level of care as an CCU.

The union formed a coalition with other community groups and elected officials to attempt to stop this change given the substantial effects such a cut would have on the working conditions for our members. But after following the Certificate of Need process, we were told this really wasn't a change at all, and that a CON wasn't necessary.

But of course, it was a big change that resulted in the loss of jobs and patient services.

When I first came to Windham 15 years ago, I asked for directions to the hospital and was told I "can't miss the hospital on the hill."

That first sight of Windham really captured for me how important this hospital is to our community. Then walking down the halls, I saw picture after picture of the people in the community who built it with their blood, sweat and tears. I saw row upon row of the names of the people who donated their hard-earned money to make our hospital the thriving healthcare facility that it was then.

When Windham first came into the Hartford HealthCare network eight years ago, our facility wasn't rich but we were doing okay. Now they tell us we're losing money. Today, after the service cuts and the job shakeups, many of us don't know what's next. Will our hospital turn into just a standing E.R. and a surgicenter?

If this occurs, we fear that our jobs -- good middle-class jobs -- will be lost forever.

The changes have been so extreme that when I picked my kids up at school the other day, a few other mothers who are also nurses were saying that Windham doesn't offer birthing services anymore! We actually offer excellent birthing services, but it's no wonder they were confused with so much "misinformation" being circulated in our communities.

We need to cherish our hospitals. Like schools, they anchor our communities. People buy homes or start businesses in a town because of the quality of the schools/ education, safety of the community, and the accessibility to healthcare.

Everyone has the right to access and affordability in their healthcare. What happens at the national level will undoubtedly affect affordability going forward. Some of that we can't control.

But changes like those at Windham are in our control at the state level. These changes are taking away access and jobs. We can fix that.

I hope you share our vision of how the Certificate of Need process can help guide healthcare in the right direction in our state. We have so much to be proud of, and so much to protect—first and foremost, access to healthcare for all our patients.

Thank you for listening.