

The **Board of Examiners for Nursing** held a meeting on December 16, 2020 via Microsoft TEAMS.

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**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Patricia C. Bouffard, RN, Chair  
Jason Blando, Public Member  
Mary Dietmann, RN  
Lisa S. Freeman, Public Member  
Geraldine Marrocco, RN  
Rebecca Martinez, LPN  
Gina M. Reiners, RN

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** Jennifer Long, APRN

**ALSO PRESENT:** Stacy Schulman, Legal Counsel to the Board, DPH  
Christian Andresen, Section Chief, DPH  
Dana Dalton, RN, Supervising Nurse Consultant, DPH  
Helen Smith, RN, Nurse Consultant, DPH  
Brittany Allen, Staff Attorney, DPH  
Joelle Newton, Staff Attorney, DPH  
Diane Wilan, Staff Attorney, DPH  
Jeffrey Kardys, Board Liaison, DPH  
Agnieszka Salek, Hearings Liaison, DPH

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The meeting commenced at 8:32 a.m. All participants were present by video or telephone conference.

#### **CHAIR UPDATES**

Chair Bouffard shared information from an Executive Order regarding the administration of COVID-19 vaccines.

#### **OPEN FORUM**

Mary Paradise, a student at Porter & Chester Institute Enfield campus addressed the Board regarding a delay in students to complete the clinical portion of their training due to the COVID pandemic.

#### **ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS**

Gina Reiners made a motion, seconded by Lisa Freeman, to approve the agenda as revised. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **NATIONAL COUNCIL STATE BOARDS OF NURSING**

Mary Dietmann provided a report regarding an education committee call in which she participated on December 8, 2020.

#### **SCHOOL ISSUES**

- University of Hartford  
Helen Smith, RN, Nurse Consultant, DPH reported that the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education has granted continued accreditation to the baccalaureate degree program in nursing at the University of Hartford for 10 years, extending to December 31, 2030.
  
- Porter & Chester Institute
  - 1) Clinical Observations  
Nancy Brunette, Philip Krebs, Sherry Greifzu, Deborah Hessell, and Joan Feldman, Esq. were present on behalf of Porter & Chester.  
Helen Smith, RN, Nurse Consultant, DPH provided a report regarding clinical observations for the Enfield campus day program on November 16, 2020 and the Rocky Hill campus evening program on December 2, 2020.  
Following the Board's review Gina Reiners made a motion, seconded by Rebecca Martinez, to remove conditional status, ordered on September 19, 2018, for the clinical deficiencies identified in their five-year study. The motion passed with all in favor except Rebecca Martinez who abstained.

2) Request for continuance of online didactic content delivery

The Board reviewed Porter & Chester's request to continue the offering of didactic content of its Practical Nursing Program in an online/blended format.

Gina Reiners made a motion, seconded by Rebecca Martinez, to approve on-line didactic content delivery until the COVID-19 pandemic emergency is lifted by Connecticut State Government. The motion passed unanimously.

• Stone Academy

1) Request for permanent blended education

The Board reviewed Stone Academy's-Proposal for permanent addition of blended distance education as a method of delivery.

Lisa Freeman made a motion, seconded by Gina Reiners, to approve the permanent addition of blended distance education as a method of delivery. Following discussion the motion failed unanimously.

2) Request for a temporary reduction of clinical hours for select cohorts

The Board reviewed Stone Academy's request for a temporary reduction of 15% of required clinical hours for select cohorts to allow the students to successfully graduate the Practical Nursing Program and subsequently sit for the NCLEX-PN.

Lisa Freeman made a motion, seconded by Geraldine Marrocco, to deny this request. The motion to deny the request passed unanimously.

3) Request for temporary increase of clinical hours achieved via virtual/simulated environment

The Board reviewed Stone Academy's request for a temporary increase to 50% of the required clinical hours can be achieved through virtual clinical scenarios as well through the use of a simulated clinical environment.

Mary Dietmann made a motion, seconded by Geraldine Marrocco, to deny the request for a temporary increase to 50% of the required clinical hours. The motion passed unanimously.

Mary Dietmann made a motion, seconded by Geraldine Marrocco, that Stone Academy suspend its offering of virtual clinical experiences effective immediately. The motion passed with all in favor except Jason Blando and Gina Reiners who abstained.

During this review there was considerable discussion concerning an August 14, 2020 Order by the Commissioner of the Department of Public Health which stated that Section 20-90-55(c) of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies is hereby amended to allow Practical Nursing Programs in Connecticut to use virtual clinical resources in compliance with the Simulation Guidelines for Prelicensure Nursing Programs established by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing as a substitute for up to 25% (twenty five percent) of in-person clinical experiences.

The Board expressed its displeasure that the Board's input was not requested before this Order was issued and that the Board was not notified of this Order until this week.

• University of Bridgeport

The Board reviewed a request to approve Dr. Linda Wagner as Director School of Nursing in the College of Health Sciences.

Mary Dietmann made a motion, seconded by Gina Reiners, to approve the request. The motion passed unanimously.

**CONNECTICUT LEAGUR FOR NURSING – Monthly Update**

Marcia Proto and Audrey Beauvais provided an update from the Connecticut League for Nursing.

**SCOPE OF PRACTICE**

Helen Smith, Nurse Consultant, DPH provided a summary of 52 nursing scope of practice inquiries received by the Department of Public Health during November, 2020.

### **CONSENT ORDERS**

Heather Lucas, RN - Petition No. 2020-44

Staff Attorney, Diane Wilan, Department of Public Health presented a Consent Order in the matter of Heather Lucas, RN. Attorney Cody Guarnieri was present with Ms. Lucas.

Gina Reiners moved, and Mary Dietmann seconded, to approve the Consent Order which imposes a reprimand and probation for a period of six months. The motion passed unanimously.

### **FACT-FINDING**

Elaine Reynolds, RN - Petition No: 2018-1301

Stacy Schulman, Legal Counsel to the Board, explained that fact-finding in the matter needs to be revisited.

Gina Reiners made a motion, seconded by , that respondent be found on paragraph 1 but that she not be found on paragraph 2 because respondent did not practice beyond the scope of her practice, therefore the charges are to be dismissed in that the Board does not have jurisdiction regarding her practice of acupuncture. The motion passed with all in favor except Geraldine Marrocco who abstained.

Karina Francis, RN - Petition No: 2020-157

Lisa Freeman made a motion, seconded by Gian Reiners, that respondent be found on all charges. The motion passed unanimously.

Lisa Freeman made a motion, seconded by Gian Reiners, that respondent's license be revoked. The motion passed unanimously

### **MOTION FOR SUMMARY SUSPENSION**

Lourdes Mercado, LPN -Petition Nos. 2019-1074; 2020-1131

Staff Attorney Brittany Allen presented the Board with a Motion for Summary Suspension for Lourdes Mercado. Ms. Mercado was present but not represented.

Geraldine Marrocco moved to grant the Department's Motion for Summary Suspension in that respondent's continued practice as a nurse is a clear and immediate danger to public health, safety and welfare. The motion was seconded by Gina Reiners and passed unanimously. A hearing will be scheduled for January 20, 2021.

### **PRE-HEARING REVIEW**

Mary Ann Connelly, RN - Petition No. 2019-1277

Staff Attorney Joelle Newton present a pre-hearing review in the matter of Mary Ann Connelly, RN. Ms. Connelly was not present and was not represented.

The Board indicated there was insufficient information to make an informed recommendation.

Attorney Newton will obtain additional information for the Board's review

### **HEARINGS**

Jessica D. Vitale, RN - Petition No. 2020-669

Staff Attorney, Joelle Newton was present for the Department of Public Health. Respondent was not present and was not represented.

Gina Reiners made a motion seconded by Mary Dietmann to grant the Department's oral motion to deem allegations admitted. The motion passed unanimously

Following close of the hearing the Board conducted fact-finding.

Gina Reiners moved, and Lisa Freeman seconded, that Ms. Vitale be found as charged. The motion passed unanimously.

Gina Reiners moved, and Lisa Freeman seconded, that Ms. Vitale's license be revoked. The motion passed unanimously.

*Geraldine Marrocco left the meeting at this time.*

Jennifer B. Martin, L.P.N - Petition No. 2018-142

Board Liaison Jeff Kardys reported that respondent had emailed the Board office requesting a postponement of today's scheduled hearing but did not offer a reason. Staff Attorney Leslie Scoville objected to the request on behalf of the Department. Chair Bouffard denied the request. The hearing will proceed as scheduled.

Sandra Blanchette, R.N. - Petition No. 2020-431

Staff Attorney, Brittany Allen was present for the Department of Public Health. Respondent was present but was not represented.

Following close of the hearing the Board conducted fact-finding.

Gina Reiners moved, and Lisa Freeman seconded, that Ms. Blanchette be found as charged. The motion passed unanimously.

Gina Reiners moved, and Mary Dietmann seconded, that Ms. Blanchette's license be placed on probation for four years with conditions. Following discussion the motion failed unanimously.

Geraldine Marrocco moved, and Mary Dietmann seconded, that Ms. Blanchette's license be revoked. The motion passed with all in favor except Jason Blando who abstained.

Teri A. Howell, L.P.N. - Petition No. 2019-623

Staff Attorney, Joelle Newton was present for the Department of Public Health. Respondent was not present and was not represented.

Mary Dietmann made a motion seconded by Gina Reiners to grant the Department's oral motion to deem allegations admitted. The motion passed unanimously.

Following close of the hearing the Board conducted fact-finding.

Mary Dietmann made a motion seconded by Gina Reiners, that Ms. Howell be found as charged. The motion passed unanimously.

Gina Reiners moved, and Lisa Freeman seconded, that Ms. Howell's license be revoked. The motion passed unanimously.

Linda Lee, L.P.N - Petition No. 2019-362

Staff Attorney, Joelle Newton was present for the Department of Public Health. Respondent was not present and was not represented.

Mary Dietmann made a motion seconded by Gina Reiners to grant the Department's oral motion to deem allegations admitted. The motion passed unanimously.

Following close of the hearing the Board conducted fact-finding.

Mary Dietmann made a motion seconded by Gina Reiners, that Ms. Lee be found as charged. The motion passed unanimously.

Gina Reiners moved, and Lisa Freeman seconded, that Ms. Lee's license be revoked. The motion passed unanimously.

*Gian Reiners, and Lisa Freeman left the meeting at this time*

Jennifer B. Martin, L.P.N - Petition No. 2018-142

Staff Attorney, Leslie Scoville was present for the Department of Public Health. Respondent was not present and was not represented.

Due to lack of quorum, fact-finding will be held during the January 20, 2021 meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**

It was the unanimous decision of the Board Members present to adjourn this meeting at 3:15 p.m.

Patricia C. Bouffard, D.N.Sc., Chair  
Board of Examiners for Nursing