

Written Testimony by Pam Kennedy  
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CHRISTUS St. Michael Health System/  
CHRISTUS Continuing Care  
Hearing Titled  
STEM Education Hearing  
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Good morning, my name is Pam Kennedy and I am the VP Human Resources and Organizational Development for CHRISTUS St. Michael Health System in Texarkana, TX. I possess a Masters Degree in Science that I obtained in Texarkana, TX and I am privileged to share my testimony today about the importance of STEM Education in our community.

**CHRISTUS St. Michael Health System Demographics and Mission**

CHRISTUS St. Michael is the second largest employer in the Texarkana areas and is nestled within over 128 acres of oak, pine, and dogwood trees along IH-30 in Texarkana, Texas. Its central location in Northeast Texas allows CHRISTUS St. Michael Health System to serve residents of Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana.

CHRISTUS St. Michael Health System includes a 312-bed acute-care hospital, the 50-bed CHRISTUS St. Michael Rehabilitation Hospital, the W. Temple Webber Cancer Center at CHRISTUS St. Michael, CHRISTUS St. Michael Outpatient Rehabilitation Center, CHRISTUS St. Michael Health and Fitness Center, CHRISTUS St. Michael Imaging Center, CHRISTUS St. Michael Rehabilitation Hospital Cardiac/Pulmonary Rehab, CHRISTUS St. Michael Day Rehabilitation, CHRISTUS St. Michael Wound Care Center and two medical plazas.

Established in 1916 by the Sister of Charity of the Incarnate Word as Michael Meagher Memorial Hospital, CHRISTUS St. Michael Health System focuses on the mission of "Extending the health ministry of Jesus Christ." CHRISTUS St. Michael offers comprehensive services ranging from specialized care for women and a Level III NICU to a Level III Trauma Center to comprehensive cancer and heart services. CHRISTUS St. Michael is a recognized leader for surgery, heart care, heart surgery and cancer care. With approximately 73,000 Emergency Department visits in FY 2010, CSM is the regional leader in specialty care.

The 50-bed CHRISTUS St. Michael Rehabilitation Hospital combines treatment and education to help patients regain the independence that may have been lost due to illness or injury. Services include occupational and speech therapy, cardiac/pulmonary outpatient rehabilitation, respiratory care, psychological evaluation and treatment, case management, nutrition/dietary and pharmacy. A

comprehensive pre-admission evaluation of each referred patient is conducted by a skilled nurse liaison and is designed to promote a smooth transition and provide an effective program of recovery. The goal is to help each patient achieve his or her highest level of functioning and return home as quickly as possible.

As the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word from Houston and San Antonio joined their congregations to form CHRISTUS Health in 1999, the leadership provided enabled our ministry to flourish and be ranked among the top 10 Catholic health systems in the United States.

It has been an exciting journey over the past 12 years, one with many accomplishments as well as challenges along the way. Establishing the Four Directions to Excellence allowed the Ark-La-Tex region to focus on the components that help us appropriately respond to the needs of our community while having positive financial results for 11 of the past 12 years. We are truly blessed at CHRISTUS St. Michael (CSM) by the opportunities to reinvest in our community through capital expenditures for advanced diagnostic and treatment options in cancer, heart, neurosurgical, neonatal intensive care, outpatient rehabilitation, health and wellness as well as other areas.

At the same time, CSM has been THE leader for our community when it comes to taking care of the poor and marginalized, whether, it's the All for Kids Pediatric Clinic, the Texarkana Community Clinic, a dental health program for the poor or the mental health crisis intervention process, it's been CSM initiating these services. For our ministry is not only "sick" care but "health" care.

Our market share has grown from approximately 30% in 1999 to 57% in 2010. CSM has received numerous awards for service and quality. CSM's patient, associate and physician satisfaction scores continually demonstrate that we have embraced the Four Directions as well as the Continuing Journey to Excellence.

All of us at CHRISTUS St. Michael are truly thankful we are the choice of more people in the four states area for health care needs. CSM is able to continue the Sisters' healthcare ministry during these often, challenging times while still being one of the CHRISTUS Health's stronger and financially performing regions.

### **Overview of Importance of STEM Education**

A STEM workforce is imperative to healthcare, our workforce, and our community. Science and technology are the foundation of the healthcare industry. Going forward, technology will be a key driver in providing care, our reimbursement, Electronic Medical Records (EMR), and sharing of information via the Health Information Exchange (HIE). In addition, we currently have two robots, one of which is a DaVinci that provides less invasive prostate and

gynecology surgeries with less recovery time, and a MakoPlasty robot, which provides minimally invasive knee and hip procedures. We need to be able to provide this education so students are prepared to easily advance when opportunities present themselves.

Fortunately, we have local colleges and universities that provide nurses and other allied health professionals to our community. We have found we have been the most successful by "growing our own" within the community because they are committed to remaining in the area after graduation. Having the local school districts teaching and providing educated students to these colleges and universities is critical to our workforce.

Associates having degrees at various levels of our organization include:

- 40% Associate Degrees (ADN Nurses, Respiratory Therapists, Medical Lab Technicians, Radiology positions)
- 10% Bachelor Degrees (BSN Nurses, Laboratory Medical Technicians, Advanced Respiratory and Radiology positions, Management/Business Science, Social Workers)
- 3% Master Degrees (MSN Nurses, Management/Business/Educational Science degrees, Pharmacists, Physical Therapists, Occupational Therapists)
- <1% Doctorate Degrees (Advanced Pharmacist and Physical Therapy positions)

### **Community Resources**

For most of the Associate and Bachelor degree programs, we can recruit within our area for the positions mentioned above. Fortunately, Masters Degrees in Business/Management/Science are available as well. For the more advanced degrees, there is normally out-migration for these degrees and we risk the student not returning to the area upon completion of their degree. If the Advanced Degrees were offered locally, this would minimize the out-migration to universities in other cities and states.

We participate in local community sponsored job fairs as well as providing an on-site job fair for local high schools. Normally, we have approximately 400 students from surrounding areas participate in learning more about health care. We assist with providing nursing instructors to Texarkana College; have provided Texas A & M – Texarkana with annual \$25,000 donations to support the Masters of Nursing program, partnership with AHEC to provide allied health practitioners, resident program for Doctors, and a family practice for local needs in healthcare.

If we can provide the STEM education locally and early in a student's educational experience we can minimize out migration to larger cities around us and to medical tourism. We have to provide exceptional, low cost, high quality services/experiences to our patients. To avoid this, we must ensure our local

students have the tools and education to prepare them for college so they will not leave the community.

As I noted above, we provide financial assistance, assistance with providing nursing instructors to the local colleges and/or universities as well as providing clinical rotation opportunities for the students. We provide on-site job fairs, interviewing techniques, job shadowing opportunities, and clinical rotations for "hands on" experiences/training.

### **Community Involvement**

We have a formal job shadowing program for local high schools, participate in Junior Achievement Board and activities to support young students, MASH program, and on-site job fairs so the students have an opportunity to visit with healthcare professionals to "plant the seeds" early. To date, this has been a very successful program and we have had students attend one of our local colleges and/or universities and join our workforce. This would not be possible if we were not able to provide STEM education locally and early in the student's education. In order for CHRISTUS St. Michael to continue to remain viable and move forward in the industry, it is imperative we have the STEM education available locally so we can continue to recruit members of our community.

In conclusion, thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns and support of the STEM education.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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