



State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY



Commission on Children

Connecticut General Assembly
Labor Committee

Public Hearing
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**Testimony of Elizabeth C. Brown
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Connecticut Commission on Children**

Senator Prague, Representative Ryan, and members of the Committee, I am here today to testify in favor of HB 5536, An Act Establishing the Connecticut Healthcare Partnership.

The bill seeks to maximize the current state employee health plan system to assist municipalities, small businesses and non-profits organizations. The cost of health care continues to escalate and research estimates that the health care industry in Connecticut is a \$15 billion dollar industry. Efforts to address the balance between quality health care and cost containment have been sporadic and fragmented. Municipalities, nonprofits, and small businesses are caught between the need to provide adequate health care and the need to keep budgets in line. This is a no-win situation, resulting in bigger premiums for employees and less access to necessary health care.

Opening up the State Employee Health Plan to these groups on a voluntary basis is a bold step in addressing the current health care crisis. This extremely well thought-out, detailed proposal is a win-win for employers and employees. It translates into reduced costs to municipalities and increased benefits for employees. It establishes an Oversight Committee to ensure that an adequate number of employers join and work with these constituencies to maintain quality and affordability. In addition, Connecticut will join other states that have enacted such legislation and learn from them what works and what does not work.

Doing nothing is not a solution. The bill before you will afford viable health care options that are just not available today in the market place. By opening the State plan to these groups, we will be able to provide many Connecticut businesses and their workers with access to a comprehensive benefit package, and provide the economy of scale necessary to keep the private insurance industry competitive and profitable.

The Commission applauds the Committee for raising this bill and developing this innovative solution to a very complex problem. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.