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**To: The State Human Services Committee**

**From: Carol Burkhardt-Lyons**  
**Director, The Naugatuck Valley Project**

**Date: February 20, 2007**

My name is Carol Burkhardt-Lyons and I reside in Waterbury, CT. I am the Director of the Naugatuck Valley Project (NVP) in Waterbury, CT. NVP is an organizing coalition of 25 churches, unions and community organizations whose mission it is to organize around jobs and quality of life issues that affect the families of the Naugatuck Valley from Torrington down to Shelton. I am asking that you pass S.B. 198 that provides Medicaid reimbursement for medical providers that treat the limited English proficiency (LEP) population. *(The estimated cost of providing interpreter services to all Medicaid beneficiaries is approximately \$4.7 million of which half will be paid by the Federal government match. (2.3. million)*

My passion for this issue comes from having deaf mute parents and having to interpret all my life, and having immigrant grandparents from Poland and Italy.

Laws regarding serving the LEP people in Connecticut are in violation of Federal Title VI, the Ct. State law, the HIPPA law, and moral laws, because we are not providing proper health care to LEP in their own language.

Opening up this market will be a boom to the health care industry. Even now some insurance companies provide reimbursement through their policies. If we create jobs through professionally trained interpreters, we will open up more markets for competitive a service In the Valley the health care industry-related businesses are the main employers.

The Valley's largest town, Waterbury alone, we has led the state in joblessness in the past two years.

Let's put a stop to unfunded mandates and let's get on with providing proper health care and building up our health care industry for our own sakes.

## NAUGATUCK VALLEY PROJECT MEDICAL INTERPRETATION FACT SHEET

Currently, most hospitals in CT do not tally or keep track of the LEP population they serve

In May of 2006, then State Senator Chris Murphy (D-Cheshire) announced that he had secured \$50,000 for a current assessment of interpretation services provided in local hospitals and to monitor how they are being improved

Cost for providing face-to-face interpreter services for Medicaid recipients not fluent in English would total approximately \$4.7 million

Connecticut can cut that cost by 50 percent by participating in the federal match program.

Managed care organizations all ready pay for interpreters services; Medicaid managed care does not document this usage

How it is done in neighboring states:

- Maine, with 2 percent of its total population limited English proficient, treats interpreter services as a Medicaid-covered expense and uses state-established billing codes to reimburse providers for the costs.
- Massachusetts, with the largest limited English proficient population (8 percent) of any state participating in the federal match, has long provided interpreter services in health encounters through its determination of need process. The state sought and received federal approval for an amendment to its Medicaid program to fund coverage for interpreter services and also uses federal funds to cover these services in hospitals that receive disproportionate share hospital payments.
- New Hampshire, with 2.4 percent of its total population limited English proficient, bills interpreter costs as an administrative expense in fee-for-service Medicaid. Interpreters enroll as providers and bill the state directly for services.

It is concluded by the Connecticut Health Foundation Policy Brief that covering costs as a Medicaid-covered expense would allow for both monitoring trends and costs, building on the existing payment structure in our State of CT. Furthermore, it is concluded a separate billing code makes it easier to distinguish costs from expenses and speeds claim processing.

Sixty-five different languages are spoken in CT. Over 45 different languages are spoken in the Naugatuck Valley towns, especially Waterbury.

Medical interpreter services create commerce (see article attached).

The largest city in the Naugatuck Valley is Waterbury, and Waterbury leads the state for the past 2 years on joblessness.

HUSKY A – Health for uninsured Kids and Youth

HUSKY B – fee for service

HIPPA - Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act