

Testimony
of
Donald Thompson
Executive Director- StayWell Health Center
on
SB 1127
“An Act Concerning the Charter Oak Health
Plan and Health Care Access”
before the
Human Services Committee

March 15, 2007

Mr. Chairmen. Members of the Committee. My name is Donald Thompson. I am the President and CEO of StayWell Health Center, a community health provider in the City of Waterbury. I am here today to testify on Senate Bill 1127, “An Act Concerning the Charter Oak Health Plan and Health Care Access”.

As you recall, this past fall, Governor Rell announced additional capital funds for the expansion and renovation of fourteen primary care facilities operated by the thirteen federal qualified health centers in Connecticut. These facilities are the medical homes, or primary health providers, for over 219,000 patients in our state. The critical funding the Governor provided will allow us to medically treat and care for an additional 85,000 patients a year. We are the largest provider of medical services to the uninsured or underinsured in this state. We currently care for one-quarter of Connecticut’s Medicaid population and 60% of the state’s SAGA clients.

The community health centers view SB 1127 as a giant leap forward in attempting to cover the working poor and those individuals who are having difficulty finding affordable health insurance coverage. With health insurance annual premiums averaging \$4,242 for single coverage and \$11,480 for family coverage, you can see how difficult it is for individuals with limited incomes, recent student graduates or those who are between jobs to pay for health insurance.

It is my understanding that the goal of SB 1127 is to provide a comprehensive medical insurance policy for under \$250 a month to individuals without insurance for a least six months, provide premium assistance to consumers who have incomes below 300% of poverty, include individuals with preexisting conditions, and screen children in our state for eligibility under the HUSKY program.

As a provider of health services, I clearly am in favor of any program the state offers to reduce our uninsured rolls which total between 200,000 to 400,000, depending on whose numbers you believe. I also am in favor of reducing the challenges we face every day in dealing with the blizzard of paperwork that accompanies each health care transaction. What we don't need is another layer of bureaucracy to confuse our patient and confound our doctors and nurses who would rather spend their precious time delivering health care, not filling out medical forms.

The StayWell Health Center is uniquely located between two financially distressed hospitals in the City of Waterbury. This bill would surely have a positive effect on their operations as well.

Whatever this committee's, and the legislature's decision is in designing a program to provide accessible and affordable health care, the community health centers look forward to our continued role in the delivery of these services to all those who walk into our facilities across the state. We have, and will continue, to serve all patients no matter what level of income they have and whether they are insured or not. That is our pledge to you and the good people of this state.