



**Testimony Before Human Services Committee Regarding:
S.B. 1360 - An Act Concerning the Availability of
Optional Services Under the Medicaid Program
March 8, 2007**

Good morning Senator Harris, Representative Villano, and members of the Committee, my name is Catherine ("Kate") Collette, RN, BSN and I am speaking on behalf of the CT Council for Hospice & Palliative Care. The Council represents 27 hospice programs in CT that provide hospice care in every community in this state.

The Council supports S.B. 1360 and any efforts to re-examine the issue of a Medicaid hospice benefit. CT is one of three remaining states that have not elected this option. This issue has been examined before and, for a host of complex reasons, this State has not moved forward in this area.

We believe that a re-examination should be done in a larger policy context that supports and re-affirms CT's model that ensures that any terminally ill patient can receive hospice care across all settings, whether at home or in an institution, regardless of insurance.

In this State, and across the nation, Medicare has been the primary payer for hospice care to terminally ill patients since 1983. There are, however, some younger terminally ill patients that are not eligible for Medicare, but are eligible for Medicaid.

While all hospices in CT are able to bill Medicaid for home care by virtue of their licensure status, not all essential hospice services are covered.

For instance, the following hospice services are not covered by CT's Medicaid program:

- services for Medicaid patients residing in nursing homes;
- social work services;
- regular interdisciplinary review; and
- at least 12 months of bereavement follow-up.

A Medicaid hospice benefit would provide access to the full range of hospice services for the younger, low-income population with a terminal illness.

In the event that cost considerations would jeopardize the enactment of S.B. 1360 in this session, the Council would support a bill to study this issue and report to the General Assembly. We believe that such a review will show the merits of this Medicaid option, both to patients & families, as well as to taxpayers.

As the voice of hospice and palliative care in CT, the Council is prepared to work with the Legislature in providing you whatever information you may need to advance hospice and palliative care policy in CT.

I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.