

The Business Council of Fairfield County

Strengthening Businesses. Strengthening Communities.

January 29, 2007

TO: Hon. Mary Ann Handley, Co-Chair, Public Health Committee
Hon. Peggy Sayers, Co-Chair, Public Health Committee
Hon. Elizabeth Ritter, Vice Chair, Public Health Committee
Hon. Gayle S. Slossberg, Vice Chair, Public Health Committee
Hon. Andrew Roraback, Ranking Member, Public Health Committee
Hon. Mary Ann Carson, Ranking Member, Public Health Committee

Tanya Court
From: Tanya Court, Director, Public Policy and Programs

RE: Testimony on Access to Affordable and Quality Health Care, Electronic Medical Records, Chronic Disease Management, Telemedicine, Health Information Technology, Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Program and Kidney Screening

- Proposed S. B. No. 1 AN ACT INCREASING ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, QUALITY HEALTH CARE.
- H. B. No. 6838 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF TELEMEDICINE TO PROMOTE EFFICIENCY IN THE DELIVERY OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES.
- H. B. No. 6839 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY.
- H. B. No. 6840 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SCREENING FOR KIDNEY DISEASE.
- H. B. No. 6842 (RAISED) AN ACT APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR PATIENT NAVIGATION.
- H. B. No. 6843 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE PREVENTION PROGRAMS.
- H. B. No. 6976 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING CHRONIC CARE MANAGEMENT.
- Proposed S. B. No. 88 AN ACT REQUIRING ELECTRONIC MEDICAL RECORDS.
- Proposed H. B. No. 6332 AN ACT INCREASING ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE.

Connecticut is facing a health care crisis. Our health care system is one of the costliest in the world. Yet, the high rate of spending has not translated into better health outcomes. While most Americans believe that our health care system is the best in the world, a number of studies indicate that Americans receive less than optimal care. Expanding access to cost effective, high quality health care is important to improving the health and productivity of Connecticut residents.

We are pleased to see that the Public Health Committee is addressing some of the issues that the Business Council of Fairfield County have called out: electronic medical records, health information technology, and chronic disease management to name a few. However, we are troubled by bills which seek increase access to health care (S.B. 1 and H.B. No. 6332) without dealing with the underlying issues of cost escalation and quality. Connecticut must address the issues of cost and quality if any expansion in access in 2007 is to be sustainable in the years ahead. One only need to take a look at the estimated cost of future state employee retiree health benefits, currently estimated at \$21 billion, and the cost of the State of Connecticut's 20 year agreement for health care benefits with the state employees union not scheduled to expire until 2017 to realize that a fiscal tsunami is headed our way.

Therefore, we recommend a policy framework that address the long term, while making an immediate difference in the life of the state's residents.

1. Make health our top priority. Our state should commit to the following goal: "Connecticut will be the healthiest in the nation, with individuals accepting responsibility for healthy living and high quality health care delivered by the most effective, efficient, safe, timely, patient centered and equitable health care system. All residents will have access to health coverage that is universal, continuous,

- affordable to individuals and families, affordable and sustainable for the state and its employers, and that enhances health and well being.”
2. Effective governments and high performance organizations use data to shape decisions and to drive performance. Consumers and purchasers of health care need reliable information in order to make good decisions selecting a health plan, hospital, or clinical practice, or when choosing among alternatives treatments. Our state should meet these needs by establishing and funding a Connecticut Center for Health Information and Analysis.
 3. Improvements in quality, safety and efficiency of the health care system are required to assured sustainable access for all residents.
 - a. Prevention and chronic disease management programs will benefit everyone's health and reduce the system's costs in the long term.
 - b. Reduce barriers to enrollment and access to quality health care through existing public programs such as Husky.
 - c. Address the issue of unintended consequences of current Medicaid reimbursement rates.
 - d. Develop a benefit plan design that gives incentives for health and well-being and review current treatment mandates for potential reprioritization.
 - e. Give health care providers incentives to implement practices that have proved to reduce or prevent adverse events and medical errors.
 - f. Expand the current system of community and school-based health centers as a cost effective way of providing quality care to those without employment-based insurance.
 - g. Promote increased use of health information technology, including portable electronic patient records.
 - h. Expand the capacity of the state's higher education systems to graduate more qualified allied health professions to address the state's looming health care workforce shortages.
 4. The Governor and the Legislature should convene a Healthy Connecticut Leaders Summit to develop a blue print for comprehensive health care reform and an on-going process to sustain reform efforts such as creation of a Connecticut Health Care Reform Study Group.