

## **Testimony Before the Public Health Committee Concerning Senate Bill 1**

Good Morning Senator Handley, Representative Sayers and all members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Maggie Meehan. I live in New Britain. I am a constituent of Representative O'Brien. I currently attend school at Central Connecticut State University. I am working on my bachelor's degree in social work and doing my internship at the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). One of our profession's core values is to pursue social change with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups. I am here today to speak on behalf of the 1 in 9 residents in Connecticut who are uninsured. I have been part of this group in the past and in June I will join them again.

I will be graduating at the end of May. I am very excited; however, it also means that as I transition from student to the workforce, I will be uninsured. Even when I do obtain employment, there is no guarantee of adequate health insurance benefits and often there is a waiting period before the benefits begin.

After graduation from high school, I did not go directly to college. Once I turned 19, I was no longer eligible for coverage under my father's benefits. During this period, I had no health care coverage. Throughout this time, my health declined significantly. Up until then, I had no health concerns. While uninsured, I was unable to afford the out of pocket expenses of seeking health care for either maintenance or periods of illness. Even if I had, I would not have been able to afford the cost of prescription drugs those of us with benefits take for granted. During this time, when I had to choose between paying

rent and utilities, eating or using my money for doctor visits and medications, I developed serious asthma and chronic bronchitis.

Losing my health insurance in June is a serious concern for me because of my asthma. In the past five months, I have visited the emergency room four times to have respiratory treatments because I could not breathe. Also, within these past five months, I have had pneumonia and bronchitis. I was fortunate that these things occurred while I was insured and able to see a specialist regularly. I am scared to think of what will happen when I lose my insurance in five months and am unable to afford to refill my daily preventative medications and see my doctor.

The health problems that developed while I was uninsured are just beginning to be corrected through treatment and medication. The cost for this is very high and virtually unaffordable without insurance to cover them. What is to happen in June? How will I afford the costly doctors appointments, the three prescriptions for my asthma, or any other prescriptions for that matter? How will I afford any trips to the ER if I should need breathing treatments?

I am sure you have heard and will continue to hear many stories from people who have either no insurance or inadequate health insurance. All these stories just reinforce how important comprehensive, affordable, and continuous health care coverage is for everyone! We all deserve prompt access to healthcare when we are ill. We all deserve the same opportunity to be healthy. The time has come to fix Connecticut's health care crisis. You all have the opportunity to help so many of us by passing a universal health care system for our state. Please do it. I thank you for your time.