

Public Health Testimony of Richard L. Brody, M.D.

March 14, 2007

S.B. No. 684: An Act Concerning Community-Based Medical Residency Training Programs

I am a family physician in practice at Generations Family Health Center, which is a Federally Qualified Community Health Center in Willimantic. I have worked at Generations for nearly three years and have been involved in the treatment of the underserved as well as resident and medical student education since 2001. In addition to clinical medicine, my experience encompasses both teaching and residency administration as an Assistant Residency Director in New York State. I am currently on the faculty of the University of Connecticut School of Medicine as Assistant Clinical Professor of Family Medicine.

Given my background and interests, I was very pleased to learn about a bill proposing the institution of community-based medical residency training programs.

Community Health is a unique and rewarding aspect of medicine which is a crucial tool to close the gaps in our current healthcare system to minimize disparities in healthcare access. It strives to provide healthcare for all individuals, regardless of insurance, financial, and demographic status. Community Health Centers provide broad-based primary care to individuals who would not have such services otherwise and would be forced to wait until illnesses become catastrophic prior to seeking emergency care in a hospital.

Unfortunately, there are not enough health care providers in this field to meet the growing needs of the underserved population of many communities both in Connecticut and across the nation.

An important key to encourage more physicians to pursue careers in Community Health is to expose medical students and residents to it early and to provide adequate opportunities for them to become familiar with it. This will enable new doctors with a potential affinity for Community Health to develop and nurture that interest where they otherwise might have turned to a different field within medicine.

While this would certainly benefit the future of healthcare, it would also help alleviate physician shortages in the involved communities nearly immediately. There would be one or more resident physicians in the Health Center or Centers who would, under supervision, be caring for these patients. Thus, the patients would have more access and shorter waiting times since there would be more manpower in the center. This would, in turn, help alleviate some of the overcrowding that is increasing in Connecticut's Emergency Departments.

In summary, I believe that this bill would have positive benefits for medical education, our medically underserved populations, and eventually for Connecticut's healthcare system as a whole.

Thank you for your time.