

TESTIMONY OF
Mary E. Inguanti R.Ph., M.P.H., FASCP
Vice President
Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center
BEFORE THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
Wednesday, March 14, 2007

SB 1067, An Act Authorizing Civil Fines For Hospital Violations

My name is Mary Inguanti and I am the Vice President of Operations and Quality at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center. Additionally, I serve as the Chief Quality Officer for our institution. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 1067, An Act Authorizing Civil Fines for Hospital Violations. Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center opposes this bill because it is in direct conflict with current national and international trends in the development of an effective culture that encourages quality and patient safety. This bill imposes punishments which most experts have shown has no effect on improving quality or patient safety.

Saint Francis as an organization was an early adopter of the culture of safety and this culture is the cornerstone of our present and future operations. We have a long standing, well established, patient safety program which spans the entire Saint Francis system. Our most senior leaders have set clear expectations regarding patient safety and quality through publicized goals. Also, open sharing of our patient safety and quality progress, as part of our transparent care delivery system, is communicated to front line staff all the way up to and including our board of directors.

Experts such as the Agency for HealthCare Research and Quality (AHRQ), the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI), and the World Health Organization (WHO) have demonstrated the value and efficacy a non punitive approach has on patient safety initiatives. Organizations across the country have been encouraged to adopt this approach by these experts. Great amounts of resources and energy have been devoted to developing this non- punitive culture within our organization and the State of Connecticut. This bill only serves to negate those efforts.

In point of fact, hospitals are already fined through various regulatory processes. Therefore, we believe the major components of SB 1067 are unnecessary. Experience and evidence has taught us that the issuance of a fine is not a catalyst for improving quality or patient safety. Conversely, punitive systems encourage under reporting of errors and an increase in legal resistance to any acknowledgement of a mistake. Rejection of this bill would demonstrate the State's recognition of the efforts that have been put forth by Connecticut's hospitals to enhance our commitment to the quality and safe care of every patient. It will also serve to reinforce the importance of early detection and systematic correction of errors by continued standardization of process and enhanced employee training. We need to work together to eliminate errors. Fines are not conducive to the implementation of a successful patient safety system.