

March 5, 2007

Good afternoon Senator Handley, Representative Sayers and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Brittmari Harwe from Wethersfield. I am testifying in support of Bill #1252. I would like to advise the committee that I have a paralyzed vocal cord so please bear with me.

In 1993, when I was just 26 years old, I had a stroke immediately following a chiropractic adjustment. I was taken by ambulance to the hospital and tests revealed that my left vertebral artery was crushed. I was diagnosed with Wallenberg's syndrome, a neurological disorder which, among other disabilities, includes left side paralysis, paralyzed vocal cord and the loss of the ability to swallow.

During the first few weeks in the hospital, my prognosis was uncertain. It was unknown if I would ever walk or talk normally again. There was even discussion about putting me in a nursing home! Since I couldn't swallow, a feeding tube was inserted. For the past 14 years now, I have been unable to eat normally and I will have this feeding tube for the rest of my life. This stroke has forever changed my life and the lives of my family.

There is no doubt that the risk of stroke exists. Unfortunately, I and many others like me are proof of this. Chiropractors themselves have admitted the risks in their own literature. In fact, the Palmer Institute for Professional Chiropractic Advancement actually offers a course in Avoiding Malpractice in Chiropractic – Stroke.<sup>i</sup> Unfortunately, to add insult to injury, many victims have been silenced by permanent disabilities or by gag orders. So the actual number of victims is unknown.

In a January 2007 letter, Richard Brassard, DC, the President of the American Chiropractic Association writes *"The chance that chiropractic manipulation will result in a serious reaction in adult patients is remote – ranging from 1 in 1 million to 1 in 5.85 million manipulations."*<sup>ii</sup> But, the International Chiropractic Association states *"that the process of chiropractic adjustment is a safe, efficient procedure which is performed nearly one million times every working day in the United States."*<sup>iii</sup> This means they acknowledge that hundreds of people are seriously and needlessly injured every year!

The American Chiropractic Association's Code of Ethics states *"Doctors of chiropractic should employ their best good faith efforts that the patient possesses enough information to enable an intelligent choice in regard to proposed chiropractic treatment. The patient should make his or her own determination on such treatment."*<sup>iv</sup> Therefore, why would chiropractors object to this bill.

In June 2005, during a malpractice case in Wisconsin, Craig Boyson, a chiropractor *"testified he preferred not to alarm patients by discussing risks he considered rare, as patients may decide against a procedure that could help them."*<sup>v</sup> In this case, the Supreme Court of Wisconsin issued an opinion stating *"A patient of chiropractic has the same right as a patient of medical practice to be informed of the material risks of the proposed treatment or procedure so that he may make an informed decision whether to consent to the procedure or treatment."*<sup>vi</sup>

Complete informed consent means not only written, but more importantly, a reasonable discussion of the risks. A discussion using the word "stroke" which is clearly understood to result in grave injuries, as opposed to using the word "reaction" which does not sound nearly as serious. With this information a patient will have the opportunity to consider the benefits vs. risks of treatment. If patients are made aware of the risk of stroke, the symptoms of stroke would be recognized and emergency medical care could be sought immediately.

I have referenced all my supporting documentation. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to express my concerns and I hope you will support Senate Bill # 1252.

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<sup>i</sup> This information can be found at <http://dconline.cc/catalog.htm> scroll down and select "Risk Management". To confirm this course is approved by Connecticut – click on "Approved States".

<sup>ii</sup> From a January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007 letter to Pediatrics (magazine) a copy of which is available at [http://www.amerchiro.org/record\\_css.cfm?CID=2152](http://www.amerchiro.org/record_css.cfm?CID=2152)

<sup>iii</sup> This information is available at <http://www.chiropractic.org/index.php?p=chiroinfo/main>

<sup>iv</sup> This is found in section A #12 at [http://www.amerchiro.org/content\\_css.cfm?CID-719](http://www.amerchiro.org/content_css.cfm?CID-719)

<sup>v</sup> Milwaukee Journal Sentinel; Chiropractors have to reveal risks, court rules by Joe Manning; Posted July 10, 2005 at <http://www.jsonline.com/alive/well/jul05/339586.asp>

<sup>vi</sup> Supreme Court of Wisconsin: Case No. 2003AP1527; Gary Hannemann v. Craig Boyson, DC.