

Legislative Testimony

House Bill 7069 An Act Concerning Access to Oral Health Care

Public Health Committee

March 5, 2007

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Senator Handley, Representative Sayers and members of the Public Health Committee Committee, good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to communicate to your Committee today. I wish to indicate my support for HB 7069, An Act Concerning Access to Oral Health Care.

The public health illusion and the oral health crisis

There are approximately 12,700 HUSKY Kids recipients in Windham County that are without access to comprehensive oral health services. The phenomena of placing kids in insurance plans where there are no providers and long waiting lists to access care is not just restricted to Windham county it is a well documented in all parts of the state.

- One in every four kids is in a HUSKY program,
- In 2004 there were 268,000 individuals in this program in the state
- Less than 30% received any Dental services.
- HUSKY A kids have the lowest dental utilization rate in New England
- Participating dentists and the overall dental workforce is declining in Connecticut
- HUSKY fees are below the 7th percentile of fees in New England
- Safety net clinics are short of dental equipment and a workforce

Under managed care for the last ten years the public health funds have been privatized. Waiting lists that are out for seven months are just an illusion that passes for healthcare.

When the state places its Husky children in the hands of the Managed care organizations with no access to oral health services what are we really saving? The insurer keeps 15% of the premium, providers spend a lot of time getting their claims paid, and parents have trouble getting appointments for their children. What do we have to show for it?

Lack of Provider Network: This is how our healthcare is being rationed

By not paying its fair share of the cost of these services the State has taken a page out of the Wal-Mart manual and contributes to the crisis of uninsured and underinsured patients. Rather than match the Federal Medicaid chip dollars that remain unclaimed by our state, it has been our state's policy to turn it's back on the needs of the kids, using denial as a coping mechanism.

I know that we now have a surplus in the state budget, but we continue with a deficit in our values. Do we not have a moral obligation to prepare a budget that includes the needs of children? That safeguards the health of its residents? Do we not claim to have the highest per capita income in the USA? If we cannot afford it then who can?

Solutions: The budget provides us with an opportunity to rethink the healthcare strategy from the patients' standpoint. The patients have generated plenty of demand. The state should reinvest in the supply side of the market making capital infrastructure investments-(Facilities) and to

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increase workforce- (Community providers). We have ten years of missed public health opportunities to recover from, so these solutions need to be resized correctly - that true healthcare savings can be realized by getting into prevention and not just stopping at treatment. Our goal should be to provide quality, compassionate and professional healthcare that is affordable, easily accessible and without discrimination to all the members of the communities we serve.

Thank you