

**Testimony of Juan Figueroa, President  
Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut**

**Public Health Committee  
Public Hearing – Access to Affordable and Quality Health Care**

**January 31, 2007**

Representative Sayers, Senator Handley, Representative Carson, Senator Roraback and members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Juan Figueroa and I am here before you today as president of the Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut.

I appreciate the opportunity to address the issue of access to affordable and quality health care with members of this committee. The purpose of the Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut is to develop a shared vision for re-shaping the health care system of the 21<sup>st</sup> century so that everyone in our state can be healthy and have access to quality health care when they need it. We view coverage of everyone as an essential threshold to this larger vision.

In that light, the foundation would like to support the goal of Senate Bill 1 and urge this committee to embrace a broad and bold view of what it will take to achieve quality, affordable health care for every resident of Connecticut. Today's hearing, building on the informational hearing this committee held on Monday, indicates that you all are serious about taking on this issue.

2007 brings us all an opportunity to do more than just create band-aid approaches to covering a few more people. It brings us the opportunity to set in place the foundation for a new system of health care delivery and financing. It may seem daunting, but if we take a long view and build consensus on the vision of a system that lives up to our values, we can start right now to forge the solution.

One place to start building a comprehensive solution is with the five principles issued by the non-partisan national Institute of Medicine in 2003. The principles define universal health care as a system that:

1. includes everyone;
2. is continuous and portable from job to job, employment to unemployment;
3. is affordable to individuals, especially those with limited income;
4. is affordable and sustainable to society; and
5. enhances health and well-being.

The foundation urges this committee to use these principles as a guide to developing a roadmap to health care for everyone in Connecticut.

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In 2006, the foundation issued two reports, summaries of which I'm handing to you today. The first report, *Mapping Health Spending and Insurance Coverage in Connecticut*, provides an economic study of the state's health care costs and gaps. The second report, *Sounding the Alarm*, raised three Connecticut-specific options for expanding health care coverage. The first two options of *Sounding the Alarm* meet the Institute of Medicine principles mentioned earlier in my testimony.

We then asked our researchers to refine the details of the first two options, which I've also included in your packet. We offer these to the legislature as a starting point for the discussion of comprehensive health care reform.

In closing, I'd like to stress three points with you today:

#1 - We must not walk away from any effort that ultimately offers every resident of Connecticut access to quality medical care, whether it be via a health insurance policy or a publicly-sponsored program. There are different ways to achieve coverage for everyone – but we must demand universality as a necessity in order to keep our state competitive and grow small businesses, the backbone of our economy.

#2 - The solution is not just about financing and extending coverage. It's also about re-tooling our health care delivery system with primary care, prevention, wellness and incentives as a centerpiece - in order to give individuals personal responsibility and a stake in their own health and well-being.

#3 - Listen to the stories you'll hear today. The stories of people struggling with a broken health care system. They are a reminder that tinkering around the edges won't work. Their stories should be foremost in our minds as we work out a solution.

This is a lot to strive for – but we owe it to the people of our state to think big and come up with a plan that will work for Connecticut. Health care for everyone that's quality, affordable and sustainable is possible. The foundation stands ready to work with you to help make it happen.