



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE January 31, 2007

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House Bill 6838 - An Act Concerning The Use of Telemedicine to Promote Efficiency in the Delivery of Health Care Services.

The Department of Public Health provides the following information with regard to House Bill 6838.

This proposal defines telemedicine as the delivery of health care services and any diagnosis, consultation or treatment using interactive audio, interactive video or interactive data communication, including the types of services described in subsection (d) of section 20-9 of the general statutes. The provisions of the bill would apply to licensed health care practitioners, including physicians/surgeons, physician assistants, chiropractors, naturopaths, podiatrists, radiographers/radiologic technologists, nurse midwives, nurses, dentists and optometrists, and would require such practitioners to obtain verbal and written informed consent from a patient or a patient's legal representative prior to the delivery of health care services to the patient through telemedicine for the first time. The bill also outlines requirements for the informed consent procedure.

Section 20-9 only applies to physicians/surgeons and requires licensure in Connecticut for any individual whose practice of medicine includes any ongoing, regular or contractual arrangement whereby, regardless of residency in this or any other state, he provides through electronic communications or interstate commerce, diagnostic or treatment services to any person located in this state. The statutes do not address whether follow-up consultations need to be face-to-face or can occur on-line, or through other means. Physicians practicing in Connecticut, whether in-person or via an alternate mechanism must comply with all laws and regulations pertaining to their practice and will be held accountable for any illegal, incompetent or negligent conduct in the practice of medicine.

The bill also requires that on or before October 1, 2008, the Department shall establish one or more two-year pilot programs to investigate the feasibility and appropriateness of using telemedicine to manage and treat patients with certain chronic health conditions, and to adopt regulations establishing guidelines for administration of the pilot programs. The Department would also be required to evaluate the pilot program(s) and submit a report to the Public Health Committee including an evaluation of the data collected with respect to improved chronic disease management and cost savings, based on patient outcomes. Although the bill requires the Department to contract through a request for proposal process with one or more entities to operate the pilot program(s), it does not include funding to support the operation of the program(s). Additionally, the Department would need to explore whether it has the expertise to establish such guidelines and develop regulations, as well as to evaluate the results of the pilot program(s), or whether the Department would need to contract with a consultant for such services.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's views on this bill.

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