



N A S W

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**Testimony on Proposed S.B. No. 1
An Act Increasing Access to Affordable, Quality Health Care
Public Health Committee
January 31, 2007
Submitted by: Mary Jane Lundgren, RN, MSW**

Good morning Senator Handley, Representative Sayers, and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Mary Jane Lundgren and I am here today on behalf of the National Association of Social Workers Connecticut Chapter which represents approximately 3,600 members. NASW is committed to the idea that health care is a right and that every resident in Connecticut (regardless of income) deserves comprehensive health care coverage. We commend Senator Williams and other Connecticut legislators for raising S.B. No. 1, committing to this moral and just cause. However, NASW believes that the most comprehensive, cost effective, and equitable way to achieve this goal would be with a single-payer health care plan that includes mental health and substance abuse coverage.

Nationwide, approximately 47 million working class citizens lack health insurance and 15.6 million US adults are underinsured. Statewide, nearly 400,000 residents (one in nine) lack access to health care. Every year the numbers are growing and as a nation, we are failing to stem the tide of rising rates of diabetes, heart disease, cancer and obesity related diseases. On an international scale, the United States has the undesirable distinction of having substantially lower life expectancy and higher infant mortality figures than other advanced countries and yet spends far more per person on health care

than any other country (75% more than Canada or France). We are the only industrialized nation to fail to provide health care coverage for all our citizens. Last year a government sponsored task force determined that Connecticut residents favored a single payer national health insurance plan versus other inadequate, half-measure plans that have been proposed by for profit insurance companies.

The case for single-payer is rationale and compelling. A single-payer system is one where there is only one payer, similar to the Canadian system. It would be similar to our Medicare system which is universal and identical, not means-tested, and administered by the government. In Connecticut, it would cover all residents under a plan similar to the State Employees Health Plan.

The reasons that NASW supports a single-payer system for Connecticut are as follows:

1. Single-Payer has significantly lower administrative costs. Studies done by the General Accounting Office and Congressional Budget Office repeatedly have shown that single-payer would save significant dollars in administrative costs. In 2002, it was projected that \$286 billion would have been saved with single-payer. This is more than would have been needed to provide full insurance coverage for all.
2. Single-Payer is good for business. Employers would no longer have to pay for medical care as part of the compensation package offered to workers. Increases in health care costs thwart job growth and have a negative effect on Connecticut's economy.

3. Single-Payer is more efficient, easier to understand, and promotes greater accountability. A fragmented delivery system is a barrier to full accountability. One place to send bills and one set of rules would be more efficient.
4. Single-Payer is more equitable. Access to health care would not be determined by ability to pay or by a profit margin. Every Connecticut resident would have equal access.
5. Single-Payer gives the government greater leverage to control costs. This system would take advantage of economies of scale and have greater leverage power in bargaining with providers.
6. Single-Payer fosters transparency in coverage decisions and promotes greater accountability to the public.

In conclusion, NASW urges the members of the Public Health Committee to consider a single-payer health insurance plan that is universal, equitable, affordable, efficient, continuous and secure. Effective reform will cut costs, improve quality of health care, and most importantly - will be socially responsible. Thank you for listening. I would be happy to answer any questions.

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