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## HEZEKIAH BEARDSLEY CONNECTICUT CHAPTER

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### Public Health Committee

Good afternoon, my name is Robert Zavoski, MD, MPH. I serve as President of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and as Medical Director of Community Health Services, a community health center here in Connecticut. I am here today to offer input from Connecticut's pediatricians on several of the bills being discussed at this hearing.

Access to health care for children is an investment in our future. It is no less important to our future than is access to a good public education. We all should expect our next generation to enter adulthood healthy and able to be productive and engaged citizens.

Regrettably, too many of our children and families lack access to adequate and affordable health care. Many are uninsured; many more are underinsured by a HUSKY Program that is failing to meet our state's needs. Too many of our neighbors delay preventive health care until they are sick. They seek care where and when it is most expensive and least effective. Many have a HUSKY card in their pocket, yet cannot find a doctor to see them. Fewer and fewer doctors can afford to see these patients because HUSKY pays far below the cost to provide the care, if it pays at all. Hospitals do not have the luxury of not participating in HUSKY; their losses are forcing them to close or limit their clinics. Our health center provides primary care to all who can make it to our door; those who need specialty services beyond what we provide are increasingly out of luck. For all of these reasons, hospital emergency departments are overflowing, as is the debt they cause the hospitals. This is not a health system; it is a prescription for disaster.

The bills being heard today start to address some of the reasons for our looming disaster. Attached to my testimony is our Chapter's recommendations on health reform. It is in everyone's interest that health access is **universal**, that care is **comprehensive, affordable, of high quality**, and that any systemic changes be **integrated**. We support Senate Bill 1 as being consistent with this philosophy. Increasing reimbursement to providers alone, as envisioned by Senator Williams last week, will substantially improve access to care. Similarly, House bills 6976 and 6839 will improve health quality, efficiency, and ultimately affordability

by promoting case management and electronic health systems; we support these bills.

In contrast, Connecticut's pediatricians have grave concerns about HB 6332 and SB 88. Senate Bill 88 would require health providers to use electronic health records despite there being no standards for electronic systems and their ability to communicate with each other. There should be agreement on such standards before we mandate them. HB 6332, making it unlawful to be uninsured, adds insult to the injury of being unable to afford health insurance.

Connecticut's pediatricians pledge to work with the General Assembly to make the dream of access to care a reality for as many of our fellow residents as possible. Thank you for your attention.