

Testimony to Connecticut State Legislature, Public Health Committee

Regarding: S.B. No. 684

An Act Concerning Community-Based Medical Residency Training Programs

Stanton H. Wolfe, DDS, MPH

I am Stanton H. Wolfe, and I thank the Committee for this opportunity to offer my testimony in support of S.B. No. 684, An Act Concerning Community-Based Medical Residency Training Programs.

I am a doctor (oral and maxillofacial surgeon) with a Masters degree in Public Health. Briefly, my background experience includes: Professor and Head of Public Health and Community Service at Tufts University School of Dental Medicine; Faculty Fellow, Tufts University College of Citizenship and Community Service; Connecticut State Oral Public Health Director; and Supervisor of the Connecticut Department of Public Health's School and Primary Health Unit, with administrative oversight of School Based Health Centers and Community Health Centers. I currently am an independent consultant in community health systems development and evaluation. In this capacity, I am working with the University of Connecticut's Masters in Public Health Program to expand and enhance students' community service learning experiences, and to create a fully integrated applied general practice program in public health.

These experiences have enabled me to gain first-hand insight and expertise in the assessment and development of healthcare delivery systems, particularly with regard to the issues of health disparities, quality of care, and access to care for underserved populations. State and regional data, and the scientific literature in public health, clearly make the case that these issues are not being adequately addressed. The health of a significant proportion of Connecticut's underserved population is growing worse; and the resultant cost to the state's communities, workforce, and already financially strapped healthcare systems is compounding.

The underlying causes of this health crisis are myriad and complex. One readily identified factor, however, is that the state is not doing what it needs to do to identify, recruit, educate, motivate, and retain a healthcare workforce of physicians, dentists, nurses, and dental hygienists for our communities' underserved populations.

S.B. 684 is a critical first step toward accomplishing this goal. Most importantly, it is the right way to go about it: it puts the leadership role in the hands of those who have a long and successful history understanding and addressing the issues – Connecticut's Community Health Centers; it concurrently enables community-based healthcare education and direct provision of patient care; it puts in place a compelling and sustainable partnership between the state's health professions schools and neediest communities; and it is cost-efficient.

Thank you again for your support of this important legislative proposal.