

**TESTIMONY
OF
KAREN W. POOLE Esquire
IN HOUSE LEGAL COUNSEL
BRISTOL HOSPITAL
BEFORE THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14, 2007**

SB 1067, An Act Authorizing Civil Fines For Hospital Violations

My name is Karen Poole, Esquire and I am In House Legal Counsel at Bristol Hospital. I am pleased to have another opportunity to testify for our institution regarding SB1067, an act authorizing civil fines for Hospital violations.

The Bristol Hospital opposes this bill and strongly urges this committee to reject SB 1067.

Connecticut is a leader in many aspects of healthcare. Through collaborative efforts between the General Assembly, the Connecticut Hospital Association, Qualidigm and the Department of Public Health, we have made significant strides in our patient safety initiatives and in quality improvement efforts. Connecticut was one of the first states to organize a Patient Safety Organization. We actively participate in mandatory reporting of adverse events as outlined in Public Act 04-164. Through the efforts of the Connecticut Hospital Association and Qualidigm, all Connecticut Hospitals report key clinical indicators related to the care of our patients. This information is available to the public through internet access.

SB 1067 would permit the Commissioner to impose a fine on hospitals up to \$10,000 per day for any violation of a statute or regulation. This bill is unnecessary, in that currently the Commissioner has the authority to impose consent decrees which can mandate a hospital to pay substantial monetary fines. The consent decree process and monetary fines are available to the public simply by going to the Department of Public Health web-page. Further it can be argued, that this type of punitive action is contrary to all State and Federal research in the field of quality improvement and patient safety.

The Institute of Medicine, who authored the *To Err is Human Research*, is adamant that punitive efforts fly in the face of effective process improvement that would result in improved patient outcomes. The Institute of Safe Medication Practices (ISMP) in their testimony to Congress reported that "the fundamental goal of reporting should go beyond counting errors to focus instead on learning about adverse events, gaining knowledge about causes and sharing that knowledge with the entire healthcare community to prevent those errors from happening again."

This bill will do nothing to advance these recommendations and successes. Healthcare in Connecticut will not be improved. Bristol Hospital strongly urges the rejection of this bill.