



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

### TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

March 14, 2007

Jennifer Filippone, Chief, Practitioner Licensing and Investigations, (860) 509-7590

### **Senate Bill 1342 - An Act Concerning Linguistic Access in Hospitals and Continuing Education in Cultural and Linguistic Competence**

The Department of Public Health opposes Senate Bill 1342.

Enactment of Senate Bill 1342 would require the Department to monitor and enforce hospital compliance with existing statutory requirements concerning the use of interpreter services for their non-English speaking population, examine the effectiveness of such requirements, and submit a biennial report to the legislature on how to improve linguistic access in hospitals. Through our hospital inspection process, the Department currently evaluates whether hospitals have appropriate communication mechanisms in place to ensure that patients and/or their families are apprised of their rights and given sufficient information about their condition to ensure they can make appropriate decisions about their treatment. In addition, the Department's Quality in Health Care Advisory Committee is currently addressing issues related to the health literacy needs of various populations through its Best Practices Subcommittee. The subcommittee understands the broad scope of this project and recognizes that implementation will occur over the next few years. Additional resources would be required for the Department to implement this proposal.

This bill requires the Department to establish a training and certification program for medical interpreters. Implementation of this initiative would also result in fiscal impact to the Department. Additional funding would be necessary to carry out the activities associated with implementing a new certification program of this magnitude, as these functions could not be absorbed within existing resources.

The Department acknowledges the need to collect additional information concerning Connecticut's healthcare workforce, including data on race and ethnicity, for the purpose of evaluating the diversity of the state's health care workforce and addressing issues related to healthcare workforce shortages and workforce development policy and monitoring. The Department supports this initiative, but has been unable to implement a manual data collection/data entry process within our current resources. The Governor's proposed budget for 2008/2009 includes the funding that is necessary to update the Department's licensing system to allow for on-line license renewal and associated transactions, including data collection. As part of the on-line transaction system, the Department plans to implement this initiative and require licensees who apply/renew on-line to enter this additional data directly. The funding provided to the Department in the Governor's proposed budget would allow for implementation of the on-line system for physicians/surgeons and nurses on or before June 30, 2009.

Many licensed health care practitioners are already required to complete mandatory continuing education as a condition of license renewal. Should this proposal move forward, the Department respectfully requests the opportunity to submit substitute language for section 4 of this bill to incorporate the requirement for an additional contact hour of continuing education in cultural and linguistic competence into the existing requirements and to incorporate provisions that would allow the Department to seek appropriate disciplinary action for practitioners who do not comply with this requirement.

Phone:

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



Telephone Device for the Deaf: (860) 509-7191

410 Capitol Avenue - MS # \_\_\_\_\_

P.O. Box 340308 Hartford, CT 06134

*Affirmative Action / An Equal Opportunity Employer*