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March 11, 2008

TESTIMONY

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

Re: HB-5906, AAC the Legislative Commissioners' Recommendations for  
Technical Revisions to the Human Services Statutes

Ellen Andrews, Executive Director, CT Health Policy Project

Thank you for this opportunity for input on this important bill.

Section 3 of HB-5906 addresses a technical revision to a last-minute, unintended addition to last year's budget directing DSS to implement premium assistance in HUSKY. Premium assistance requires HUSKY families with access to employer-sponsored insurance to enroll in that plan and disenroll from HUSKY, if the plan is less expensive than HUSKY. DSS would somehow reimburse families for co-pays, premiums, co-insurance and services that are often not covered in policies available to low-wage workers such as vision, dental and prescriptions. It is unlikely that working families on HUSKY would have the liquid cash to pay up-front for those services and await repayment by DSS, so more than likely, children and families would simply not get care. Many other states, with mature Medicaid managed care programs, have tried to make premium assistance work and failed. DSS has not yet implemented premium assistance.

Another bill before your committee, HB-5618 -- AAC Revisions to the HUSKY Plan, provides the best remedy for premium assistance. Among other important provisions, HB-5618 reverses last year's error and deletes direction to DSS to implement premium assistance. The HUSKY program is facing some important, ultimately beneficial, but radical changes. However positive, those changes are already placing pressures on families, providers and a fragile system of care; adding a difficult and costly initiative like premium assistance at this point would be reckless. Premium assistance in HUSKY is unwise and never should have been added to the budget; passage of HB-5618 would repair that mistake.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important legislation and for your commitment to the health of all Connecticut residents.