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**TESTIMONY OF  
ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARD BLUMENTHAL  
BEFORE THE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE  
FEBRUARY 26, 2008**

I appreciate the opportunity to speak on Senate Bill 34, An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations with Respect to Social Services Programs.

I urge rejection of sections 1 and 2 of this legislation.

Section 1 eliminates the requirement that Medicaid cover the costs of foreign language interpreter services for health services. Many of our Medicaid population have limited English skills. Health care providers must correctly and fully understand patients' description of the medical condition, including what medications may have been taken by the patient and the events leading to the need for health care intervention. In these situations, a foreign language translator can avoid unnecessary tests and prescriptions by accurately reflecting the medical condition and events to the health care provider. Proper care of our Medicaid population is a legal and ethical duty. Our participating health care providers need all the tools necessary to make an accurate diagnosis and treatment.

Section 2 requires that the Department of Social Services use the State Administered General Assistance (SAGA) program definition of medical necessity in the Medicaid program. The Governor's budget anticipates savings through this change. The Medicaid definition of medical necessity for purposes of covering health care prescribed by a physician or health care provider is recognized as being fair to patients and granting appropriate deference to physician analysis and prescription, while complying with the federal Medicaid statutory requirement of covering services needed by the patient to maximize independence. See, 42 USC §1396. The SAGA definition would be a step backward for Medicaid patients, leading to rejection by the state of insurance coverage for doctor prescribed services.

In the best interests of our Medicaid population, I urge the committee to reject sections 1 and 2 of Senate Bill 34.