

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

REGARDING S.B. 662

AN ACT CONCERNING MEDICAID ELIGIBILITY AND REIMBURSEMENT

MARCH 11, 2008

Senator Harris, Representative Villano and members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Diane Maiorano RN, MBA and I am the Administrator of A & B Homehealth Solutions in New Haven, Connecticut. I am also a member of the Connecticut Association for Home Care & Hospice's Government Relations Committee and the State of Connecticut Flu and Pneumococcal Coalition.

I am here today to ask your support of SB 662 and would like to take this opportunity to share my perspectives on section 4 regarding improving access to flu shots for Medicaid patients.

Over the past several years, home care agencies have been responsible for expanding the number of flu and pneumonia vaccinations for residents of Connecticut, either through their own flu clinics or through mass immunization settings such as local grocery stores and pharmacies. The vast majority of these immunizations have been provided to the senior population under their Medicare benefit.

Literally thousands of Connecticut residents have received their vaccinations in these settings due to the easy access and the automatic submission of the related billing that is done by home health agencies.

Unfortunately, this easy access to the flu and pneumonia immunization by home health agencies is unavailable to persons covered by Medicaid as there is no reimbursement mechanism in place at the current time.

Changes which have occurred over the past few years in relation to the purchasing practices and the delivery system of the vaccine have exacerbated the access issue for Medicaid patients. With a no return policy and uncertain delivery dates for vaccines, physicians who serve Medicaid patients have been increasingly reluctant to commit to purchasing large quantities of the flu vaccine.

With statistics showing that 36,000 people die each year from complications from the flu and another 200,000 people hospitalized from flu related complications nationally, this proposal provides important protection to a vulnerable population. It is likely to save more dollars than it costs due to reduced hospitalizations and emergency room use, as well as the efficient nature of mass immunization clinics.

I strongly urge your support of this proposal and suggest that language be added to the effect of:

- *In the case of a vaccine being administered to a Medicaid patient in the home, the Commissioner shall develop a fee for the vaccine in addition to the fee otherwise available for administration of medication.*
- *The Department shall promulgate regulations, but shall also implement this section while regulations are pending.*

Thank you.