



103 Woodland Street  
 Hartford, CT 06105-1240  
 860-249-4862

***Testimony for Bill No. 662***

Good morning Senator Harris, Representative Villano, members of the committee, my name is Beka Apostolidis. I am here as a clinician and representative of VNA Healthcare. I have been a nurse for ten years, specializing in cardiology. I worked at Hartford Hospital as a staff nurse and unit manager. I'm currently the cardiac program manager at VNA Healthcare.

I am here today to **support** section 6 of SB 662, which creates a pilot program of 150 telemonitors for Medicaid patients with selected diagnoses.<sup>1</sup> VNA Healthcare has been utilizing telemonitors since 2002. We first began with approximately 40 monitors, focusing on cardiac and pulmonary patients. Presently we are monitoring over 160 patients with varying diagnoses and insurances.

Telemonitors are small electrical devices placed in patients' homes. The telemonitor is programmed at a certain time during the day to obtain a patient's vital signs. It 'speaks' to the patient, instructing them step by step on how to use the device. It can be programmed in up to ten different languages. The telemonitor obtains the patient's weight, blood pressure, heart rate, oxygen saturation, and temperature. The patient is then asked four to five diagnosis specific questions in which he/she is instructed to answer either 'yes' or 'no'. The monitor also has peripheral devices, such as a six second single lead ekg to monitor patients with arrhythmias. The patient's information is then transmitted to our office where a telemonitor nurse reviews and triages the data. If needed, patients receive a phone call or a nurse is sent to see them for further evaluation.

Telemonitors are small, compact devices. In our recent telemonitor satisfaction survey 94% of the patients felt that the telemonitor was easy to use.

Telemonitors improve clinical outcomes by managing patients with chronic disease and addressing interventions in a timely, cost effective manner. One goal of telemonitor utilization is to increase patients' self-efficacy. Patients who take their vital signs seven days a week have direct and immediate feedback on how their diet and/or medication effects their health. This in essence, improves patient compliance and belief that they are able to manage their disease. Therefore, patients are more likely to take their medication as prescribed and call a healthcare provider with reportable symptoms. As a result, patients decrease the likelihood of an emergency room visit or hospitalization.

Homecare trusted by Connecticut families & physicians for more than 100 years.

Hartford VNA Since 1901 103 Woodland Street	Waterbury VNA Since 1903 50 Brookside Road	Glastonbury VNA Since 1919 969 Hebron Avenue	Cheshire VNA Since 1920 1781 Highland Avenue, 2nd Fl	Windsor Locks VNA Since 1920 50 Church Street	Southbury 519 Heritage Road
---	--	--	--	---	--------------------------------



103 Woodland Street  
Hartford, CT 06105-1240  
860-249-4862

Page 2

Telemonitors also provide real time data to off-site practitioners, who can intervene prior to an acute flare up. Studies have shown that telemonitors can reduce thirty day readmission rates of congestive heart failure patients by 20%. With the use of the telemonitor, physicians are able to make medication adjustments and see how the patient responds without having to admit the patient or see him/her in the office.

To date our agency has served over 3,000 telemonitor patients, with approximately 30% living in Hartford. Over 94% of telemonitor patients believed it was useful in assisting them with the management of their health and 91% felt an increased sense of security. Numerous patients have commented that the telemonitor has kept them out of the hospital. One patient believes that the telemonitor 'saved her life'.

Moving forward, a pilot study such as is proposed in section 6 of SB 662 could truly demonstrate the effectiveness of telemonitors in increasing Medicaid patients' self-efficacy and reducing hospital readmissions.

As our population continues to age and the number of people with chronic illnesses increases, healthcare providers are faced with the challenge of providing quality, cost effective care. Various studies have shown the effectiveness of telemedicine; however, further research can only enhance and support positive outcomes.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today and I would be happy to answer any questions.

Beka Apostolidis, RN, MS  
VNA Health Care  
860 493 7451  
bapostolidis@vnahealthcare.org

<sup>i</sup> The bill specifies congestive heart failure and diabetes, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. For clarity sake, I recommend that the language be changed to indicate that any of these three diagnoses would qualify the Medicaid patient for the pilot.

Homecare trusted by Connecticut families & physicians for more than 100 years.

Hartford VNA Since 1901 103 Woodland Street	Waterbury VNA Since 1903 50 Brookside Road	Glastonbury VNA Since 1919 969 Hebron Avenue	Cheshire VNA Since 1920 1781 Highland Avenue, 2nd Fl.	Windsor Locks VNA Since 1920 50 Church Street	Southbury 519 Heritage Road
---	--	--	---	---	--------------------------------