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

I appreciate the opportunity to support House Bill 5617, An Act Delaying Implementation of and Making Revisions to the Charter Oak Health Plan.

This proposal addresses many problems concerning the affordability and efficacy of the proposed Charter Oak Health Plan. The plan is designed to provide health insurance coverage to many of Connecticut's working poor. Unfortunately, some of the statutory limitations and co-payment requirements would prevent many intended beneficiaries of this plan from participating.

House Bill 5617 eliminates the requirement that families be uninsured for six months prior to being eligible for participation in the Charter Oak Health Plan. No family should have to wait six months without needed medical services as a prerequisite to qualifying for Charter Oak benefits. Further, under this legislation, monthly premiums should not exceed \$250 while annual deductibles should not be more than \$100. Co-payments for emergency room visits should be limited to \$20 rather than the current \$150.

Very significantly, this measure would require that all mandated benefits, including mental health coverage, be provided under the plan. This requirement is especially important because the proposed plan would not currently cover the same mental health benefits that the state mandates for all private health insurance plans. Finally, the bill establishes an independent appeal process, eliminates maximum coverage for prescription drugs and medical equipment and requires contracting for Charter Oak Health Plan administration be conducted separately from HUSKY.

Importantly, this legislation also requires that any insurer offering Charter Oak coverage have at least an 85% medical loss ratio, meaning that at least 85% of the funds go to medical coverage rather than administrative costs and profit.

Adjusting these elements of the plan will ensure more uninsured Connecticut citizens receive more and better health care through Charter Oak.

I urge the committee's favorable consideration of House Bill 5617.