



Connecticut's Statewide AIDS Coalition

**Testimony of Shawn M. Lang
Human Services Committee
26 February 2008**

Senator Harris, Representative Villano; I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today. I'm Shawn M. Lang, the Director of Public Policy with the CT AIDS Resource Coalition, Connecticut's only statewide HIV/AIDS organization. We work to ensure that the 10,000 people living with HIV/AIDS in our state have the housing, care and supportive services they need in order to live their lives in dignity.

I am here to testify in support of HB 5617 and 5618, which are designed to improve access to health care under the HUSKY program, as well as under the Charter Oak Health Insurance Plan, and in opposition to sections of the Governor's bill, SB 34, which would gut the Medicaid definition of medical necessity and eliminate coverage for medical interpretation services.

SB 5617 goes a long way to address concerns that many patients and advocates raised at the December forum. We applaud the provision that would delay its implementation for one year. In particular, I want to highlight a few of those provisions that are critical to the lives of people living with HIV/AIDS:

- Mental health parity
- Removal of drug and DME caps
- cost-sharing is reduced
- comprehensive dental and vision care
- the six-month waiting period is removed

SB 34 calls for the elimination of medical translation services. We urge you to restore this important provision. Lack of translation services are a key barrier to racial and ethnic health equality.

The majority of people with HIV/AIDS in our state are people of color; and Connecticut ranks 3rd in the nation in AIDS cases per capita among Latinos. Local and statewide needs assessments among people with HIV/AIDS point to language as a significant barrier to care. Medical interpretation services are critical for our folks and we therefore urge you to restore this service.

Thank you. I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.

connecticut **AIDS** resource coalition