Statement of Gina Carucci, D.C.
before the
Human Services Committee
February 26, 2008
In Support of HB 5617

Sen. Harris, Rep. Villano and members of the committee:

My name is Gina Carucci. I am a Chiropractic Doctor, practice here in Connecticut and serve as the legislative committee chair of the Connecticut Chiropractic Association. I am representing our association today in regard to House Bill 5617, ***An Act Delaying Implementation of and Making Revisions to the Charter Oak Health Plan.***

A little background. When Governor Rell first proposed the Charter Oak plan, we Chiropractors were very excited. We saw the possibility of a cost-effective health insurance plan being created and marketed to consumers who don't currently have coverage. I can't tell you how many people we see and treat who don't have health insurance. They don't have it because: a) their employer doesn't offer it, or b) they can't afford it on the open market. Many of my patients have a preexisting condition that insurers won't cover.

We then saw the RFP that was released by the Department of Social Services. If you read it, the RFP sets forth various medical services that any bidder would have to cover. It also specifically excludes certain medical benefits including vision, dental and chiropractic. We're pleased to see that RB 5617 would mandate coverage of dental and vision services. We request that you amend the bill to also add in chiropractic.

Research from Medicare, managed care organizations, workers compensation and the state of Vermont all demonstrate the cost-saving benefit of chiropractic care. In 1999, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services compiled data on beneficiaries treated by a doctor of chiropractic and those who were not. The chiropractic-treated group represented 1.5 million lives or 26.8 %. This population had lower average Medicare payments per capita for *all* Medicare services ($4426. vs $8103).

We are the primary portal of entry in the health care system for many issues pertaining to the neck, spine and back. If we are excluded from Charter Oak, all it means is that patients will be sent to see an MD or orthopaedic specialist. Meanwhile, we could be seeing and treating them at a lower cost.

A major part of our practice is walking through our patients with a number of things they can do to live a more healthy lifestyle. Don't you want that as part of this initiative? We do it every day.

We're good enough for Medicare. We're included in worker's compensation. We provide services in HUSKY. We are the third largest medical specialty in the nation. On

what basis are we excluded from Charter Oak? It is blatently unfair. It is also penny wise and pound foolish.

At the current Medicaid rate, a chiropractor is paid $13 per visit. If that patient were to go elsewhere (i.e. the primary care physician, orthopedist, neurologist or emergency room), the cost would be far greater. Additionally, many times the patient will have to wait for several weeks to be seen, which forces them to go to the emergency room. Why would you want to put them through this? We have chiropractors who can see these patients today . . . right now.

In summary, the Connecticut Chiropractic Association supports this legislation. We would ask that you step in and mandate additional standards over this program since it is partially state funded. As part of this, we ask that you include a mandate that Charter Oak include chiropractic as a covered service. Thank you.