

**Testimony
of
Donald Thompson
President and CEO, StayWell Health Center, Inc.
on
HB 5617 (Raised)
“An Act Delaying Implementation of and Making Revisions to the Charter
Oak Health
Plan”
before the
Human Services Committee**

February 26, 2008

Mr. Chairmen. Members of the Committee. My name is Donald Thompson. I am the President and CEO of StayWell Health Center, Inc., a federally qualified community health center and long standing safety net provider in the City of Waterbury. I am here today to testify on **HB 5617 “An Act Delaying Implementation of and Making Revisions to the Charter Oak Health Plan”**

As you recall, in 2006, Governor Rell announced additional capital funds for the expansion and renovation of fourteen primary care facilities operated by the thirteen federal qualified health centers in Connecticut. These facilities are the medical homes, or primary health providers, for over 219,000 patients in our state. The critical funding the Governor provided will allow us to medically treat and care for an additional 85,000 patients a year. We are the largest provider of medical services to the uninsured or underinsured in this state. We currently care for one-quarter of Connecticut’s Medicaid population and 60% of the state’s SAGA clients.

The community health centers view The Charter Oak Health Plan as a key initiative that will provide coverage the working poor and those individuals who are having difficulty finding affordable health insurance coverage. In doing so, the Charter Oak Plan will provide greater access to services for patients and families who may now be using emergency departments rather than establishing a medical home at an FQHC that would provide continuity of care.

If the goal of the Charter Oak Plan is to provide a comprehensive medical insurance policy for under \$250 a month to individuals without insurance for a least six months, provide premium assistance to consumers who have incomes below 300% of poverty, include individuals with preexisting conditions, and screen children in our state for eligibility under the HUSKY program, as a provider of health services, I clearly am in favor of any program the state offers to reduce our uninsured rolls which total between 200,000 to 400,000, depending on whose numbers you believe.

The StayWell Health Center is uniquely located between two financially distressed hospitals in the City of Waterbury. This bill would surely have a positive effect on the dilemma our city faces in trying to care for all of its residents many of whom are uninsured. Hospitals and health centers face similar challenges with regard to caring for growing numbers of patients without coverage and with limited resources who are NOT Medicaid eligible.

Whatever this committee's, and the legislature's decision is in establishing a program to provide accessible and affordable health care, all the federally qualified health centers in the state join me in affirming that we look forward to our continued role in the delivery of these services to all those who walk into our facilities across the state. We have, and will continue, to serve all patients no matter what level of income they have and whether they are insured or not. That is our pledge to you and all the people of this state.