

Statement of Gretchen May-Fendo  
before the  
Public Health Committee  
in support of  
House Bill 5702  
March 3, 2008

Sen. Handley, Rep. Sayers and members of the committee:

My name is Gretchen May-Fendo. I am a licensed Respiratory Care Practitioner, work with my patients at Bridgeport Hospital and serve on the legislative committee of the Connecticut Society for Respiratory Care. I am representing the organization today in support of House Bill 5702, *An Act Concerning the Use of Asthmatic Inhalers by Students*.

We have been concerned over the fact that some students under our care are not permitted to possess their inhalers while at school. Instead, the student is required to drop off the inhaler at the nurse or administrative office. The problem is this delays the student's ability to respond immediately to an asthma attack. Minutes can elapse before the inhaler is redeemed from its location and used by the student. This delay could cause serious injury or even death.

CTSRC is mindful of the fact that procedures and policies over student self-medication are largely set by the individual school districts or by a local board of education. We do not want to interfere with that process.

However, we believe strongly that in cases where a written certification is made by a licensed member of the respiratory care profession that the student's condition is such that they need to have constant access to an inhaler, that the request should be honored. We also believe this certification authority should extend to the student's physician and other appropriate healthcare professionals.

As you consider this matter, please know that the Connecticut Society for Respiratory Care stands ready to work with you on crafting statutory language that all entities can accept. We make this proposal because we want to ensure that a student can react immediately to an asthma attack by having constant access to his or her inhaler. We know that you will carefully review this request and we urge you to move this legislation forward so that the issue can be addressed this session.

Thank you for permitting me to make comments on this bill. I will be happy to answer any questions you might have.