



Connecticut State Conference of NAACP Branches

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Human Services Committee Public Hearing February 26, 2008

CT NAACP SUPPORTS GOVERNOR RELL'S PROPOSAL FOR A MEDICAID HOSPICE BENEFIT

Good morning Senator Harris, Representative Villano and members of the Human Services Committee, My name is Scot X. Esdaile, President of the Connecticut State Conference of NAACP Branches. I am here this morning to testify in support of Governor Rell's proposal to add hospice services under the Connecticut Medicaid Program in S.B. 34 (An Act Implementing The Governor's Budget Recommendations With Respect To Social Services Programs)

Over the past few years, the Connecticut NAACP has made healthcare disparities a major priority. One of the most important issues of today is social injustice as it pertains to access and quality of care for all Americans and particularly for African Americans. In July 2007, the Connecticut State Conference of NAACP Branches Health Committee published "A Health Status Report on African Americans in Connecticut". This report reviewed historical, prospective, and qualitative data to highlight the ongoing challenges of African Americans in Connecticut as they relate to continued inequities in health care.

The report is alarming, in that African Americans in Connecticut, despite the significant economic wealth of the state, continue to suffer and bear the burden of excessive disease, death, disability and dissatisfaction. The report tells members of the Connecticut State Conference of NAACP Branches that there is much to do relative to continued social injustice in health care. This report highlights not only the significant gap in morbidity and mortality between the majority population and the African American community, but also the direct cost, to this state, of maintaining two separate systems of care-one for the majority population and another for people of color.

We have consistently supported legislation that addresses social injustices in the State of Connecticut, particularly when it concerns healthcare access. Governor Rell's proposal to include hospice coverage for Medicaid beneficiaries will greatly improve quality end-of-life care for people of color.



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Based on current Medicare data, non-white hospice utilization in Connecticut is especially low:

- Fairfield County non-white population: 19%
 - i. Fairfield County non-white hospice utilization: 6.3%
- Hartford County non-white population: 21%
 - ii. Hartford County non-white hospice utilization: 7.3%
- New Haven County non-white population: 19%
 - iii. New Haven non-white hospice utilization: 5.4%

These facts speak for themselves. We believe including hospice coverage for Medicaid beneficiaries will begin to address the glaring disparity in end-of-life care that exists today in Connecticut. Thank you for your attention to this issue and I would be happy to answer any questions.

You can read "A Health Status Report on African Americans in Connecticut" in its entirety on our website at <http://www.naacpct.org/>.