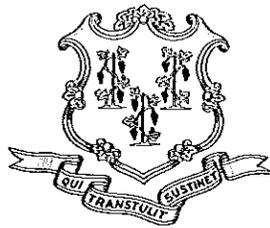


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February 5, 2009

Good morning Senator Doyle, Representative Walker and members of the Human Services Committee. I am here to testify in support of SB 344, AN ACT CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF PODIATRY SERVICES UNDER THE MEDICAID PROGRAM. .

In 2002, the Department of Social Services (DSS) eliminated podiatric care under its Medicaid optional services in order to achieve cost savings in its budget; the effect of this elimination was not as anticipated or intended. The result was instead a cost shift with additional reimbursement primarily to "other MD" with a small percentage to orthopedists who have a significantly higher reimbursement rate. In other words, DSS must pay physicians in other specialties to perform the same services often at a higher cost. This policy shift also discouraged many podiatry clients, such as diabetics, from seeking preventative care which can allow them to lead longer, healthier and more

productive lives. For some of these clients this change represented a de facto restriction on preventative care which we all understand to be both more compassionate and more cost effective.

In addition, one extraordinarily negative impact upon clients who no longer receive preventative care from podiatrists is that they may face the far more drastic intervention of amputation because they no longer receive needed medical attention on an ongoing basis. Podiatrists are skilled in providing the kind of preventative care which alleviates the need for this more drastic intervention. I have included a copy of the OLR report that I requested which demonstrates the lack of cost savings achieved when the state ceased its coverage of podiatric services. I urge you to support this bill as it is compassionate as well as fiscally prudent