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Connecticut State Medical Society Testimony in support of
House Bill 5172 An Act Establishing the Connecticut Healthy Steps Program
March 2, 2009

Senator Harris, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee, Senator Crisco, Representative Fontana and members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee, Senator Doyle and Representative Walker and members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Matthew Katz, Executive Vice President of the Connecticut State Medical Society (CSMS). On behalf of our more than 7,000 members thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today in support of House Bill 5172 An Act Establishing the Connecticut Health Steps Program.

CSMS supports many of the concepts contained in HB 5172 An Act Establishing the Connecticut Health Steps Program. We believe that this bill goes a long way in providing Connecticut's uninsured and underinsured with health benefits and increased access to a comprehensive quality patient care system. Though some specifics need further clarification, we believe that this bill begins to improve provider, especially physician, reimbursement through appropriate indexing mechanisms to better incentivize physicians to participate in the program and provide access to needed medical services for this population.

CSMS believes, as this bill highlights that preventive services and disease management must be a cornerstone of any program or plan designed to maintain and ensure the health and safety of Connecticut's population. This bill takes steps toward increasing the availability of preventive services and we look to work with this committee and others to make sure that any disease management program is effectively constructed and implemented. It must also include and specifically rely on the expertise and knowledge of well trained clinicians, especially physicians who specialize in chronic conditions, such as asthma, heart disease, and diabetes. We also commend this bill's interest in pediatric preventive services and immunizations, as well as its interest on increasing access to and payment for mental health and behavioral health services.

CSMS further believes that there needs to be a preservation of graduate medical education and teaching systems due to their integral role in any health care system, especially one interested in reform and looking toward the future.

This bill also has a strong focus on patient safety and continuity of quality patient care and encourages and financially supports a transition to an electronic medical records and record keeping system for physicians, other providers and their patients.

Finally, this bill looks to increase the level of transparency in all aspects of the medical and health care system. CSMS believes that transparency must be at the base of any health care

system and this must include any and all insurers and payors if we are truly going to a health care system that is patient centered and patient focused.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony to you today on this critical issue.