5172

Statement on

House Bill 5172 – An Act Establishing the Connecticut Healthy Steps Program
and
House Bill 6600 – An Act Concerning the Establishment of the SustiNet Plan

Public Health, Human Services, and Insurance and Real Estate Committees
March 2, 2009

This statement is being submitted on behalf of the members of the New London County Medical Association concerning House Bill 5172 and House Bill 6600.

We applaud the members of the three Committees for their commitment to insuring the uninsured and as physicians; we too support health care for all and are very concerned with the amount of people in Connecticut who are either underinsured or uninsured. As Committee members are well aware, uninsured and underinsured people do not seek out or receive preventative healthcare and normally wait longer to seek health care, which in many cases makes their medical conditions more serious by the time they do receive medical care. Further, emergency rooms are becoming overcrowded with patients who use the emergency room as their first point of contact for healthcare. In these cases early treatment would most likely have treated and cured a condition and a trip to the emergency room would not be necessary.

We believe that if Connecticut is to move towards universal health care, we must do so responsibly and that any plan that is passed and implemented must take into account the following:

- Connecticut's uninsured and underinsured are provided with necessary health benefits and adequate access to a comprehensive quality patient care system

One Regency Drive
P.O. Box 30
Bloomfield, CT 06002
(860) 447-9408
Fax (860) 286-0787
Website: www.nlcma.org

- A reformed health system in Connecticut guarantees both equitable and statewide access to quality patient care
- Adequate funding levels with appropriate indexing mechanisms ensure that providers, especially physicians, enroll and actively participate in the program
- Preventative 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
- Comprehensive access to medical care must also include pediatric preventive services and immunizations as well as parity for mental health and behavioral services
- Any funding mechanism provides adequate funding of comprehensive quality patient care and allows the funding to follow the patient resulting in enhanced portability
- Preservation of graduate medical education and teaching system is integral in any health system reform and the State's academic medical centers continue to be an essential part of Connecticut's medical system
- Focus is on patient safety and continuity of quality patient care and encourages and financially supports a transition to an electronic medical records and record keeping systems
- Transparency in all aspects of the medical and health care system, including insurers and payers is the foundation for a patient focused reformed system

We are also particularly impressed with the SustiNet plan which was developed with input from physicians, healthcare, residents' statewide, business, labor and policy makers and consumer advocates and puts an emphasis on primary preventive care and measures. It creates a "medical home" which promotes healthy behaviors and management of chronic illness and coordinates care with timely access.

Further as physicians are practices are small businesses with overhead expenses. We know first-hand the difficulty and expense of acquiring healthcare insurance for our

patients. A pooling system such as the SustiNet plan will help to guarantee Connecticut residents access to health care insurance coverage and would help to control costs.

We understand that enacting universal health care will not be an easy task and we welcome the opportunity to work with you.

For more information, please call:

You Sung Sang, MD, President
Phyllis Darby, Executive Director
Melissa Dempsey, Director of Government Relations

(860) 447-9408