



State of Connecticut  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY



Commission on Children

Human Services, Public Health and Insurance Committee  
Public Hearing March 2, 2009

Testimony Submitted by Elizabeth C. Brown

Senator Doyle, Senator Harris, Senator Crisco, Representative Walker, Representative Ritter and Representative Fontana and members of the Committee. My name is Elizabeth C. Brown, Legislative Director of the Commission on Children. I appreciate the opportunity to testify this morning on several bills that offer fundamental change to the health care industry.

HB 6582, An Act Establishing the Connecticut Healthcare Partnership.

What a difference a year makes! This bill garnered wide support last year with passage in both the House and Senate. The new Obama Administration is making health care reform a major public policy initiative. The state is facing enormous deficits, with health care costs the major driver of escalating budget expenditures, estimating at topping at 16% of the overall budget deficit projections. The percentage of healthcare costs per family is projected to rise to the unprecedented 30% of family income per year in the not to distant future, 2016. The timing is perfect for this innovative, comprehensive solution to true systemic reform.

The bill seeks to maximize the current state employee health plan system to assist municipalities, small businesses and non-profits organizations. The cost of health care continues to escalate and research estimates that the health care industry in Connecticut is a \$15 billion dollar industry. Efforts to address the balance between quality health care and cost containment have been sporadic and fragmented. Municipalities, non-profits and small businesses are caught between the need to provide adequate health care and the need to keep budgets in line. This is a no win situation, resulting in bigger premiums for employees and less access to necessary health care.

Opening up the State Employee Health Plan to these groups on a voluntary basis is a bold step in addressing the current health care crisis. This extremely well thought out, detailed proposal is a win-win for employers and employees. Translated into reduced costs to municipalities and increase benefits for employees. It establishes an Oversight Committee to ensure that an adequate number of employers will join and work with these constituencies to maintain quality and affordability. In addition, Connecticut will join other states that have enacted such legislation and learn from them what works and what does not work.

Doing nothing is not a solution. The bill before you will afford viable health care options that are just not available today in the market place. By opening the State plan to these groups, we will be able to provide many Connecticut businesses and their workers with access to a comprehensive benefit package, and provide the economy of scale necessary to keep the private insurance industry competitive and profitable.