



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

### TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE March 6, 2009

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#### **House Bill 6391 - An Act Concerning Revisions to the HIV Testing Consent Law**

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The Department of Public Health **supports** House Bill 6391.

The Governor's proposal will align Connecticut HIV testing consent legislation with the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) updated recommendations for HIV testing, published in 2006. These recommendations include making voluntary HIV testing a part of routine health care for adults ages 13-64 years old. Connecticut's current HIV testing legislation, developed at a time when HIV infection was untreatable, is a barrier to implementing these recommendations in health care settings.

#### **Changes proposed in this bill that align with CDC's recommendations include:**

- Eliminating the requirement for separate, written consent for an HIV test;
- Eliminating the requirement for extensive pre-test counseling for all HIV tests;
- Adding the requirement that any person who tests HIV positive is informed about medical services and local or community-based HIV/AIDS support services agencies.

#### **Quick Facts About HIV**

- The CDC estimates that 25% of people with HIV do not know that they are infected.
- In Connecticut, 10,860 people are reported to be living with HIV/AIDS, with an estimated 600 new infections in 2006 (CT DPH).
- People unaware of their HIV infection cannot benefit from the new highly effective treatments and may unknowingly transmit the virus to others.
- Early detection and management of HIV infection can delay or prevent progression to full-blown AIDS.
- CDC data (2004) shows that almost 40% of AIDS cases found out they were HIV positive less than a year before their AIDS diagnosis.

The Connecticut DPH has heard from physicians that they would routinely offer HIV testing to their patients, but find the current requirements overly cumbersome.

*This legislation will facilitate routine voluntary HIV testing in health care settings in Connecticut.*

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's views on this bill.

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