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Testimony before a Joint Hearing
of the Committees on Public Health,
Insurance and Human Services on
H.B. 6600 An Act Concerning the
Establishment of the Sustinet Plan
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The Connecticut Catholic Conference, the public policy office of Connecticut's Catholic Bishops, and a member of the Interfaith Fellowship for Universal Health Care, would like to urge the members of the committees represented here today to support H.B. 6600 "An Act Concerning the Establishment of the Sustinet Plan" and the concepts for health care reform it incorporates. The Conference recognizes that there are many other efforts underway within the legislature and the executive branch to improve our health care system, but feels that H.B. 6600 is the most comprehensive proposal currently before this legislature. We realize that many deliberations and compromises will occur before a final solution to the health care crisis is developed. H.B. 6600 should be used as the centerpiece for any future health care discussions because of its comprehensive nature.

Catholic social teaching holds health care to be a basic human right. This is reflected in the long history of the Catholic Church's involvement in providing health care services within our own state and throughout the world. The Catholic Church has long been an active participant in the call for health care reform in our state and nationally.

The continuing increase in medical costs and its financial burden on business and family budgets, and the large number of uninsured persons, are the two primary factors pushing the calls for reform. The need for health care reform is clear as thousands of people within our state lack employer sponsored insurance or can not afford to purchase their own health care coverage. The uninsured also cause a continuing strain on our health care system as doctors and hospitals continue to provide care, but with little or no compensation for their services. These providers are dependent on the state and its taxpayers to help cover these uncompensated expenses.

The design of the Sustinet Plan contained in H.B. 6600 addresses the key factors that some other plans presented to this legislature lack. H.B. 6600 makes coverage available for all Connecticut residents despite their employment status, has affordable co-pays and premiums, provides quality levels of coverage, including dental, and supports preventive medicine. It also has several medical management provisions aimed at reducing costs through better and more comprehensive patient management.

Our state and nation, along with many families, are currently facing very difficult economic times. However, this should not deter this legislature from undertaking much needed health care reform. In the long run a quality universal health care system may result in saving the state money and making life more manageable for Connecticut families. Health care expenses are an ever increasing burden on many of our state's families. Especially, as the number of unemployed continue to increase.

Most of you probably know someone, maybe even in your own family, who lacks affordable quality health care. In my own family I have three children in their mid-twenties. One daughter has full insurance coverage as a public school teacher. Another lacks any insurance coverage, despite the fact that he works a forty hour week as an EMT for a state ambulance service. He just can not afford the premium payments for the insurance offered by his company. And my oldest married daughter, who has to pay almost \$12,000 dollars a year to cover herself and her one year old child, because her husband's company will only cover his premium. She is a stay at home mom and their savings, which they have used to pay the premium, will soon be depleted. They do not know what they will do for insurance coverage once this occurs.

The Connecticut Catholic Conference hopes the committees represented here today will recognize the basic right all our citizens have to quality, affordable health care. Economic times are difficult, but they will only get worse for many employed and unemployed Connecticut citizens, if health care reform is delayed any longer.



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