



**NARAL
Pro-Choice Connecticut**

Public Health Committee

HB 6675, An Act Increasing Access to Health Care in Connecticut

Written Testimony of Jillian Gilchrest, Executive Director

NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut

March 16, 2009

I represent both, NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut, a statewide political advocacy non-profit that works to guarantee every woman the right to make personal decisions regarding the full range of reproductive choices, and the Connecticut Coalition for Choice, which is comprised of 15 organizations that collectively represent over 130,000 individuals statewide.

I am writing in support of HB 6675, An Act Increasing Access to Health Care in Connecticut. Currently, the state of Connecticut has the opportunity to receive a 90% federal Medicaid match—when the state's normal federal match is 50%—by applying for a Section 1115 waiver otherwise known as the family planning waiver.

The family planning waiver provides Medicaid coverage for family planning services to individuals in households with income up to 185% of the Federal Poverty Level who are not otherwise eligible for Medicaid-- individuals of child bearing age who do not already have children. The current income ceiling for Medicaid coverage is 157% of poverty; while the ceiling for pregnancy related care is 185% of poverty.

The Department of Social Services has made public statements regarding the population this waiver will serve and the Charter Oak Health Plan. Although there might be some overlap in population, according to the Guttmacher Institute it is estimated that by implementing the family planning waiver the state of Connecticut will see an expansion of 39,900 participants.

Many women of child bearing age, who actually rank amongst the highest number of uninsured, would benefit from a family planning waiver because they might not be willing or able to pay the monthly premiums of the Charter Oak Health Plan and many women of child bearing age use their annual visit to the family planning facility as their basic health care for the year.

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According to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, establishing parity between the Medicaid eligibility level for family planning and the level for pregnancy-related care that Connecticut currently receives would result in state savings of \$15.5 million annually.¹

HB 6675 requires that the Commissioner of Social Services in consultation with the Commissioner of Public Health and the State Comptroller shall develop short-term and long-term recommendations addressing the most effective use of the temporary increase in federal funds received by the state, including but not limited to, federal funds received that are attributable to the enhanced federal medical assistance percentage, for purposes of utilizing such funds to provide improved access to health care for state residents.

Currently, 27 states have Medicaid Family Planning Waivers. Please allow Connecticut to join these states by supporting this legislation and preventative services that will benefit Connecticut's citizens while saving the state dollars.

¹ Frost JJ, Sonfield A and Gold RB, Estimating the Impact of Expanding Medicaid Eligibility for Family Planning Services, *Occasional Report*, New York: Guttmacher Institute, 2006, No. 28.