



University of Connecticut Health Center  
*Center for Public Health and Health Policy*  
*Institute for Public Health Research*

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Good afternoon, Senator Harris, Representative Ritter and members of the Committee. My name is Mary Eberle. I am a faculty member at the University of Connecticut Health Center and I work in the Center for Public Health and Health Policy, which is a university-wide center dedicated to public health teaching, research, and service activities. I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

I am here to testify in support of SB 1079, AAC the CT Health Information Network, or CHIN. CHIN is a collaborative project to develop a federated health data network that will link selected databases of the participating agencies. In 2007, the Legislature gave funding of \$1,000,000 over the biennium for the development of CHIN and tasked the University and the Department of Public Health, in collaboration with the Departments of Developmental Services, Children and Families, Information Technology and the Office of Health Care Access, to "develop a Connecticut Health Information Network plan to securely integrate state health and social services data, consistent with state and federal privacy laws, within and across" the participating agencies. The Health Center and DPH jointly convened two working groups to accomplish this task, one for technical issues and one for policy issues. All of the named agencies have been represented on both working groups, and have actively participated in and supported the development of the CHIN plan. SB 1079 has been developed from the discussions of the CHIN working group on policy, which has explored the legal and confidentiality issues confronting the implementation of CHIN.

The purpose of SB 1079 is to remove any uncertainty regarding the status of CHIN under the various state privacy and confidentiality laws applicable to the participating agencies. The policy work group unanimously agreed that, rather than amend all of these statutes, it would be preferable to enact a "notwithstanding" provision that would leave those statutes in place for all their current purposes but make it clear that they did not prohibit the release of identifiable data to CHIN. SB 1079 will make it clear that agencies may release such data to CHIN for the purposes of data matching and de-identification without violating state confidentiality laws. This will greatly facilitate the development of CHIN and will promote collaboration and data sharing among the agencies by removing both real and perceived legal barriers to CHIN's operation.

I would ask that you make one change to SB 1079 before it leaves the Committee. Please add Chapter 368z to those covered by the "notwithstanding" provision, in order to include the state statutes applicable to the Office of Health Care Access. This chapter was inadvertently omitted from the language previously submitted to the Committee. We would be happy to work with the agencies and the Committee to make further changes to the language, as deemed necessary.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. I'd be happy to take any questions.

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