

HILL HEALTH CORPORATION

Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, and Respected members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Gary Spinner, and I am Chief Operating Officer of the Hill Health Center, a federally qualified health center that last year provided services to CT residents from 125 of CT's cities and towns. I am also a practicing Physician Assistant who provides direct primary care to patients. Hill Health Center provides dental services at 3 locations in CT, two in New Haven, and one at the Richard O. Belden Dental Clinic in Derby. We have been a dental safety net provider for the State's Medicaid, SAGA, and uninsured population for 40 years, and the elimination of Medicaid coverage for dental services would force us to eliminate dental services that currently provide 20,000 dental visits annually. While we have been appreciative of the State's prior investment of bonding dollars to help us build our infrastructure to provide dental care, elimination of reimbursement would force us to eliminate services. Oral health care is not only necessary to maintain a person's teeth, but we have learned that lack of adequate oral health provides poorer health outcomes for many medical conditions as well. Regarding the implementation of co-payments for Medicaid, it has long been our experience that co-payments discourage patients from keeping appointments for

care necessary for their health maintenance. For those patients who do keep their appointments, a lack of co-payment has come directly from the health center's reimbursement, effectively reducing our ability to maintain current services at a time when greater numbers of patients are in need of them. As a practicing primary care provider, I have seen first hand the poor health outcomes that have directly resulted from a patient's choosing not to get needed prescriptions filled for chronic conditions for lack of a \$3.00 co-pay. I have seen this lead to more costly emergency department visits and in-patient hospital admissions as a direct result. Please consider this information in making the difficult budget choices you are faced with.

Thank you for your consideration of these two issues of vital importance to our Medicaid and SAGA clients.

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