

March 2, 2009

TESTIMONY
EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE
Re: Nomination of Kevin Lembo as the state Healthcare Advocate
Ellen Andrews, PhD
Executive Director

Thank you for the opportunity to voice our strong support for Kevin Lembo as Connecticut's Healthcare Advocate. As a member of the Office of Healthcare Advocate's Advisory Committee since its inception, I can testify that Mr. Lembo has exceeded our expectations, receiving glowing recommendations from the committee. We were aware of his considerable experience in health care systems, consumer protection and advocacy when we recommended his nomination five years ago, but he has built on those qualifications and to significantly expand the impact of OHA. He has increased the capacity of the office to serve Connecticut struggling health care consumers and become a national leader in promoting and protecting the rights of consumers.

OHA's caseload has increased every year during Mr. Lembo's tenure and, given the current economic climate, that need is expected to accelerate. Mr. Lembo has ably guided a small but dedicated staff to meet those demands returning over \$5 million last year to Connecticut consumers in treatment and services denied by insurers. This office is a bargain for the state, returning \$5.07 to consumers for every dollar spent. As the Executive Director of a community organization that provides outreach and assistance to struggling health care consumers, we rely heavily on OHA to advocate for our complex clients. No community organization can match their resources and success rate in assisting consumers fighting with large insurance companies.

Under his leadership, OHA has been able to secure critical changes to policies that served as barriers to consumers getting needed health care. These include a statutory definition of medical necessity, a law protecting consumers from unfair health insurance rescissions, cancellations or limitations of individual policies, and national advocacy to ensure mental health parity for every American while protecting the rights of Connecticut consumers.

As a member of the Office of Healthcare Advocate Advisory Committee and a consumer advocate, I urge you to reappoint Kevin Lembo as Connecticut's Healthcare Advocate so he can continue the growth and success of the office in meeting the needs of Connecticut's struggling health care consumers.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to excellence in public service.