

**Testimony of Victoria Veltri, General Counsel, Office of the Healthcare Advocate
Before the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee
March 12, 2009**

In Support of the Confirmation of Kevin P. Lembo, Healthcare Advocate

Good afternoon Representative Janowski, Senator Looney, Senator McKinney Representative Piscopo and members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. For the record, I am Victoria ("Vicki") Veltri and I am General Counsel for the Office of the Healthcare Advocate (OHA). I also serve as the office's legislative liaison.

I am honored to have the truly great pleasure of testifying in support of Kevin P. Lembo's confirmation as the Healthcare Advocate for a second four-year term. It should be said at the outset that I am here today on my own time and of my own volition. It is important to share with you the very strong support Kevin enjoys from the OHA staff and to testify to his ability to not only lead the day-to-day work, but also to parlay that very efficient and effective work into meaningful systemic work on the state and federal levels.

Kevin leads the office in a collegial manner. He knows that the office team is bigger than any one of us alone. He taps the passion in each of us to excel and hone our advocacy skills, and critically, he has been able to merge the different functions--case work, legislative and administrative advocacy, education and plan selection assistance--of the office into an advocacy model for the country. While I report to Kevin, he treats me as a partner in accomplishing legislative tasks and working through a myriad of other legal and administrative issues with state agencies, insurers, provider groups, advocacy organizations and individual consumers. Working directly with him always creates synergy and effectiveness.

At OHA we function smoothly as a team and productively and successfully in our individual roles. We're entrusted with not only very critical healthcare matters, but also with developing solutions to systemic problems. This trust, perhaps more than any of Kevin's other assets, says all you need to know about his leadership.

Kevin embraces technology in developing new OHA resources for the public and is keen on advancing the use of new media within our budget as a way to reach out and educate a broader audience of healthcare consumers.

Kevin is effective because he is extraordinary. He devours healthcare literature. He's one of the most knowledgeable people in the state on a broad range of commercial and public health insurance issues. He seeks and includes staff opinions on issues facing the office. Kevin can sieve through any complicated set of issues in short order, identify the most critical problem and develop a solution or a map a path to a solution within only a few minutes.

Kevin cultivates relationships with other agency heads, legislators, his peers across the country, federal officials and insurers. He serves as a consumer advocate for the National Association of Insurance Commissioners. He testified in front of Congress on the national problem of rescissions, something he continues to lead the fight on in Connecticut. Senator Dodd called on

him last year and earlier this year to help save recently passed federal mental health parity legislation and protect Connecticut's legislation.

To be an effective and respected Healthcare Advocate requires: dedication; the willingness to sacrifice time and energy beyond the typical work week for so many tasks; the ability to listen to all sides of an argument before making any judgments; working with insurers, patients, legislators, providers, advocates and regulators; a personality that fosters professional development of staff; the ability to be assertive when necessary to protect consumers; and, an ability to absorb criticism and turn it into effective advocacy. These are Kevin's strengths and another four year term will allow him to further validate them and continue to lead the office successfully.

I am proud to work at the Office of the Healthcare Advocate. I am grateful to be entrusted by Kevin with my duties as general counsel. In turn he has earned the trust of my colleagues and me, the clients we serve, providers, advocates in Connecticut and around the country, legislators, members of our executive branch, the members of congressional delegation, insurers and so many others.

Finally, and most importantly, Kevin is not afraid to take a stand on behalf of healthcare consumers that might not be popular or welcomed. This is the true test of his mettle as the leader of a watchdog agency. He is guided by one overriding interest – consumers of health insurance. And that is as it should be.

I respectfully request that you vote to confirm Kevin Lembo as the Healthcare Advocate and send his confirmation to the full House with your unanimous support.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen J. Ueffel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.