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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

REGARDING S.B. 1122

AN ACT CONCERNING MEDICAID ELIGIBILITY AND
REIMBURSEMENT

MARCH 17, 2009

Senator Doyle, Representative Walker and members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Brian Carney and I am the Director of Finance at the Danbury Visiting Nurse Association, Inc. I am also a member of the State of Connecticut Flu and Pneumococcal Coalition.

I am here today to ask your support of SB 1122 and would like to take this opportunity to share my perspectives on section 2 regarding improving access to flu shots for Medicaid patients.

Over the past several years, home care agencies have been responsible for expanding the number of flu and pneumonia vaccinations for residents of Connecticut, either through their own flu clinics or through mass immunization settings such as local grocery stores and pharmacies. The vast majority of these immunizations have been provided to the senior population under their Medicare benefit.

Literally thousands of Connecticut residents have received their vaccinations in these settings due to the easy access and the automatic submission of the related billing that is done by home health agencies.

Unfortunately, this easy access to the flu and pneumonia immunization by home health agencies is unavailable to persons covered by Medicaid as there is no reimbursement mechanism in place at the current time.

Changes which have occurred over the past few years in relation to the purchasing practices and the delivery system of the vaccine have exacerbated the access issue for Medicaid patients. With a no return policy and uncertain delivery dates for vaccines, physicians who serve Medicaid patients have been increasingly reluctant to commit to purchasing large quantities of the flu vaccine.

With statistics showing that 36,000 people die each year from complications from the flu and another 200,000 people hospitalized from flu related complications nationally, this proposal provides important protection to a vulnerable population. It is likely to save more dollars than it costs due to reduced hospitalizations and emergency room use, as well as the efficient nature of mass immunization clinics.

I strongly urge your support of this proposal.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian A. Carney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and "C".

Brian A. Carney

Director of Finance