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**Testimony before the Insurance and Real Estate Committee**

**Tuesday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009**

**1.00 PM in Room 2B of the LOB**

Good morning Senator Crisco, Representative Hartley and members of this Committee. My name is Frank Sykes and I am speaking on behalf the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC). The Commission is a non partisan state agency committed to advocating on issues impacting the well-being of African-Americans in the state. Today the Commission testifies in support of the following bills.

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***SB 423 – An act increasing health insurance coverage for bone marrow testing***

*And*

***SB 458 – An act requiring communication of mammographic breast density information to patients***

In reference to **SB – 7** according to the Department of Public Health (DPH) even though deaths resulting from breast cancer in the state have decreased over the past 30 years, breast cancer remains the second leading cause of cancer death among African-American women. 552 Connecticut women died from breast cancer in 2004 and Connecticut had the 26<sup>th</sup> highest rate of death from breast cancer in the U.S. in 2004. Historically as a group African American women are more likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer later in life and generally have shorter survival times than other groups, yet research from the Institute of Medicine, confirms that routine screening in clinical trials resulted in a 25 to 30 percent decrease in breast cancer mortality among women between the ages of 50 and 70.<sup>1</sup> The Commission's hope is that this legislation provides women from low-income backgrounds even greater access to breast cancer screening, future detection methods and treatments and reduce death rates attributable to breast cancer.

Similar to lack of access to vital organs a shortage of marrow donors continues to be a major problem for African-Americans, suffering from diseases of the blood and immune system such as leukemia and lymphoma. Since tissue types are inherited, patients in need of a bone marrow transplant are most likely to match with someone from the same ethnic group, yet for some, identifying a match for bone marrow implantation can be virtually impossible, drastically limiting chances of survival. The most recent available data from the New England Bone Marrow Registry indicates that of the 106,862 residents signed up to be donors, a mere 3 percent are African-American. For these reasons the Commission supports **SB – 423 290**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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<sup>1</sup> Institute of Medicine, *Mammography and Beyond*