

**Statement from the Connecticut Chapter of the American College of Physicians (ACP)  
In Support of  
House Bill 6600 – An Act Concerning the Establishment of the Sustinet Plan  
Public Health, Insurance and Real Estate, and Human Services Committees  
March 2, 2009**

The American College of Physicians (ACP) is a national organization of internists — physicians who specialize in the prevention, detection and treatment of illnesses in adults. With 126,000 members ACP is the largest medical-specialty organization and second-largest physician group in the United States. On behalf of the over 2100 members of the Connecticut Chapter of ACP, I would like to express our support of House Bill 6600 regarding the proposed Sustinet Plan for expanding health insurance coverage in Connecticut.

The ACP supports state level expansion of access to health care coverage as a means to achieving universal access to health care. We believe that universal access to care is a key component of a system of health care that can provide high quality, cost-effective, affordable, and equitable health care for all Americans. The Sustinet Plan will significantly expand access to health care coverage for groups that currently are among those at greatest risk for being uninsured or underinsured against the vagaries of illness – the self-employed, employees of businesses unable to offer adequate coverage, individuals with “pre-existing conditions” and those undergoing transitions in employment.

In achieving expanded access to health care coverage for the underinsured, the Sustinet plan incorporates a number of elements that are in accordance with ACP policy and recommendations for health care reform, such as the Patient Centered Medical Home as the basis for primary health care, an emphasis on prevention and coordination of care, expansion of Health Information Technology to improve storage and exchange of health information, quality of care improvement programs, portability of coverage, and incentives to promote high quality, cost-effective care.

**The Patient Centered Medical Home**

ACP believes that the Patient Centered Medical Home model of care delivery, which is a central element of the Sustinet Plan, can improve the quality of care and reduce costs through improved coordination of clinical care and social services, more efficient communication, better management of complex chronic illnesses and more effective application of preventive measures. The ACP, along with other major medical organizations, such as the American Medical Association (AMA), the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), and the American Academy of Pediatrics (APP), strongly supports implementation of the Patient Centered Medical Home as the basis for a more efficient and effective system of care. The Sustinet Plan will promote the Medical Home model by setting standards for qualification as a Medical Home provider, compensating providers for coordination of care, and supporting infrastructure to enhance the function of Medical Homes. We believe that primary care internists and other primary care physicians are best suited to serve as the leaders of Medical Home teams, and should be directly involved in committees that set standards for care and the operation of Medical Homes. We urge that in implementing the Sustinet Plan, compensation for clinical services and coordination of care be set at levels that ensure adequate participation of providers and maintenance of the primary care workforce.

### **Prevention and Coordination of Care**

The key to reducing the burden and cost of significant illnesses is to prevent them from occurring in the first place, to identify them early when they can be treated more effectively, and to provide coordinated care when they do occur. By emphasizing prevention and coordination of care through the Medical Home model, the Sustinet Plan promises to bring the overall costs of care down, improve health outcomes for its participants, and provide better access to other beneficial services. Its effects in terms of better outcomes and lower costs may also go beyond participants in the plan by promoting better standards of care among Connecticut providers that other patients may benefit from as well.

### **Health Information Technology**

ACP strongly supports the implementation of Health Information Technology to improve the efficiency of health care. Better information systems are necessary to insure that vital patient information is available when and where it is needed, to reduce inefficiencies in the coordination of care, to reduce errors in communication, and to enable monitoring of care services and patient outcomes to improve quality and reduce the costs of care. We applaud the emphasis that the Sustinet Plan places on improving information systems, and its efforts to set standards for such systems to ensure they are effective and can work together. Cost has been a barrier to the adoption of such systems, and since all will benefit, we feel that physicians alone shouldn't bear the entire cost of the transition. We agree with the plans of Sustinet to support financing for the transition, but feel other sources of support, perhaps from federal programs, may help to increase participation.

### **Quality of Care Monitoring and Improvement**

By mandating establishment of quality of care standards and improving Health Information Technology tools to collect, analyze and report performance data, we believe the Sustinet Plan will have positive effects on the quality of care provided to patients. We strongly support the participation of physicians in the process of developing quality standards and analyzing data collected. We also support the concept of risk adjustment in evaluating performance data to ensure fair comparisons and prevent barriers to care for the sickest patients. ACP has been in the forefront of establishing guidelines for the care of numerous medical conditions, which could serve as the basis for Sustinet quality standards. We support the plan for requiring quality improvement and patient safety programs among participating providers. We also support the plan for a no-fault compensation system for patients harmed despite adherence to quality guidelines.

### **ACP Supports the Sustinet Plan**

Overall, we feel that the Sustinet Plan is a well thought out, carefully crafted plan that brings together state of the art elements of health care reform to improve access and reduce the costs of care for the citizens of Connecticut. Although adoption of such a plan can be daunting at a time of economic stress and uncertainty, we feel that in the long run it will reduce costs and promote economic development while improving the quality and length of life for our citizens. The Connecticut Chapter of ACP supports the Sustinet Plan, and we encourage our legislators to do so as well.

*For further information, please feel free to contact:*

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