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Connecticut State Medical Society Testimony
Senate Bill 678 AN Act Concerning Health Care Cost Containment
Presented to the Public Health Committee
March 16, 2009

Senator Harris, Representative Ritter and Members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Dr. William Handelman and I am currently the President of the Connecticut State Medical Society (CSMS). On behalf of our more than 7,000 members, thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony to you today on Senate Bill 678 An Act Concerning Health Care Cost Containment. Our members share the same goals and concerns as this committee to develop a health care system that provides the highest quality of care to our patients and eliminates unnecessary costs within the system. That being said, we offer the following comments on this proposed legislation and welcome the opportunity to work with you to address concerns and obtain goals.

First, and most important to the bill before you is to define in greater detail the make up and establishment of a "Cost Containment Authority." CSMS agrees that the establishment of such a committee could prove to be an integral part of any health care system reform in Connecticut. Equally as important is to ensure that such committee includes the involvement of Connecticut physicians who are the foundation of the health care delivery system. Ensuring that such an authority has the financing, resources and ability to fulfill its mission is also critical.

A cautious and appropriate first step for this committee would be to establish pilot programs similar to CSM demonstration project to determine whether various care models, information technology, disease management and case management are appropriately structured for Connecticut with its unique workforce issues and demographics.

CSMS understands and on face value supports the goals of Section 2 of SB 678, to increase patient involvement and understanding of the care they receive. We also acknowledge the protection such shared decision making with provide physicians by giving prima facie evidence that truly informed consent is obtained. However, a great deal of time, effort and work must go into developing an appropriate program as administrative burdens on physicians already detract from the time available to provide hands on patient care. The inclusion of all the elements of a shared decision making document

would take more time to draft and discuss with patients than the actual evaluation and treatment associated with the visit. We must carefully address this issue of consent further as expanding and requiring such consent for more than those currently for which it is obtained (e.g. surgical procedures) and placing the requirement on all medical services and procedures dramatically alters the standard of medical care as currently established within the practice of medicine.

Finally, we ask that section 5 be eliminated from the bill. This section would mandate that physicians treating women in the third trimester of pregnancy provide information regarding the banking or donating of umbilical cord blood. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists currently opposes this state mandate as it is not cost effective and mandates standards of care in State Statute.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments to you today. CSMS welcomes the opportunity to address concerns raised in this testimony with members of the committee.