

Statement of Jeffrey Steinberg, M.D.
before the
Human Services Committee
in support of
HB 5411

Sen. Doyle, Rep Walker and members of the committee:

My name is Dr. Jeffrey Steinberg and I am the Chairman of Surgery at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center. As the Chairman of Surgery, I am responsible for the credentialing standards, medical quality program and educational initiatives of the 35 Podiatrists who practice and the 6 Podiatry Residents who are in training at Saint Francis.

As you are aware, Saint Francis Hospital is a critically important safety net provider for many of the vulnerable underinsured and uninsured citizens of the Greater Hartford area. Saint Francis, as a Catholic Health Ministry, has a long history of providing uncompensated health services for the greater community benefit. In fiscal year 2008, the hospital provided nearly \$40 million of community benefit services, \$36 million of which represented Charity Care and unpaid costs of Medicaid. During this same time period, hundreds of podiatry patients were seen by our podiatry staff and podiatry residents in the Burgdorf Health Center and Center for Advanced Wound Healing on the Mount Sinai Campus; both venues serve a disproportionate share of Medicaid patients. Despite receiving state-of-the-art podiatric and wound care, the current system provides for no reimbursement for our dedicated podiatry providers. These vital clinics are chock full, and because of the lack of care alternatives in the community, many patients unfortunately have to turn to our already over-crowded emergency rooms. As a result, these patients often times are seen in the later stages of their disease, needing more complex and expensive limb salvage treatments because of difficulty accessing podiatrists in the community for more appropriate preventive care.

Given the multiple strains on our already teetering health care system, I strongly urge you to approve HB 5411. Let's use our well trained podiatrists in the State of Connecticut to provide this care in their offices, a much more appropriate and economical venue rather than in our crowded and ultimately more expensive hospital emergency rooms.

Thank you for your kind consideration.