



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Testimony Presented Before The Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee

February 3, 2011

Nomination Of **Jewel Mullen, MD, MPH, MPA** For Commissioner of the Department of Public Health

Good afternoon, Chairpersons Looney and Janowski, Ranking Members Fasano and Piscopo and other distinguished members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. I am Dr. Jewel Mullen, nominee for Commissioner of the Department of Public Health. I present myself to you with humility, acknowledging the honor and responsibility associated with this nomination. I would like to thank Governor Malloy for selecting me. I also thank you for this opportunity to tell you about myself and the career path that has prepared me for this position. I am committed to service and leadership.

In 1984 after I completed my medical residency I worked at Bellevue Hospital in New York as a member of the National Health Service Corps. 1984 was the beginning of the HIV epidemic. I witnessed the stigma people experienced by being gay, hemophiliac, Haitian and possibly infected. We wore gloves and masks when we examined them and we counseled women that they were not at risk. Obviously we did not understand the disease's risk factor, but we acted based on what we understood from early surveillance, the "data." As we learned more about AIDS I gleaned the importance of consistent surveillance and scientific inquiry and how they must inform health promotion and disease prevention efforts.

But even when the benefit of prevention is obvious, implementation is not always easy. Pregnant patients often smoked in the clinic waiting rooms but I was unsuccessful in convincing colleagues and administrators that we should initiate a smoking cessation program for them. Obstetricians were concerned that patients would avoid prenatal care if we addressed the effects of smoking on pregnancy outcomes. My failure taught me about the challenge of crafting policy that is palatable and that makes sense for those it is supposed to benefit.

When I joined the Hospital of Saint Raphael in 1992 as the Director of Ambulatory Teaching I improved patients' access to care by starting an evening clinic so that patients without flexibility to attend daytime clinic hours could still get to their appointments. I addressed quality and efficiency, engaging my administration to determine appropriate nursing staff levels and scope of practice and to ensure trainees received appropriate oversight as they cared for patients. We also improved our appointment system to decrease wait times.

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country the need for public health to demonstrate its role in health reform is clear. I will collaborate with partners in other states and at CDC to ensure Connecticut contributes to defining public health's future. Closer to home, I intend to build partnerships with others such as local public health departments, community providers, foundations, professional societies and academia as we establish realistic goals and priorities for the department. I will focus on prevention of chronic disease, as I believe that it is the key to ensuring the well-being of all our residents and to controlling health care costs. These efforts will help create a brand for the work of our department and for public health in general. Along the way, we will ensure that our licensing and regulatory functions serve their intent, and that we are using the right data to address health care shortages across the state. I am committed to advancing the work of our Health Information Technology Exchange to support providers and ensure meaningful use of data. This effort is just one of the many efforts that will keep DPH central to state and national health reform programs.

I will approach my work with a spirit of collaboration and with integrity, transparency and the willingness to listen to new ideas. Our work will be informed by best practices from across the nation, not just from the state where I most recently worked. I know that the challenges we face as a state are large and that many changes must be incremental. But I already appreciate how many of you have welcomed me to the conversation about how we find solutions together. I look forward to working for you and with you.