Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition
Mobilizing for Children

Testimony of the Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition
Submitted to the
Joint Public Hearing of the Public Health, Human Services and
Insurance & Real Estate Committees
February 14, 2011

RE: Support for HB 6305, An Act Concerning Implementation of the SustiNet Plan

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition, BCAC, a coalition of 80 member organizations, parents and other concerned individuals. BCAC sincerely thanks the SustiNet Board for its hard work and diligence over the past year and for their recommendations to continue to move SustiNet forward.

The Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition supports HB 6305, An Act Implementing the SustiNet Plan. SustiNet will provide Connecticut's residents with affordable health care coverage, better health coverage options and peace of mind. The plan will provide the State of Connecticut with millions of dollars in cost-savings, as well as critically needed new revenues.

For those of us who have been working years to improve access to affordable health care, HB 6305 cannot be passed soon enough. We are closer than ever to ensuring that Connecticut's residents have health care coverage and are able to get the health care services they need.

We know too well that the state is suffering during this economic downturn. We also know that the rising cost of health care is contributing to the deficit problems. Connecticut is spending $8 billion each year – and still, hundreds of thousands of residents are uninsured and thousands of small businesses are struggling to meet payroll because of the rising health care costs.

The SustiNet Plan is the solution we need. We are confident that when its recommendations are fully implemented, SustiNet will save the state millions of dollars each year. The State Comptroller has estimated that just by pooling the state employees, state retirees and Medicaid recipients under the SustiNet umbrella, Connecticut would save $60-80 million in one year alone just in prescriptions. The *Hartford Courant* estimates cost savings of over $200 million by 2017. Some of these savings come from increased Medicaid reimbursements and subsidies through federal health care reform. Other savings come from adopting patient-centered medical homes, using electronic medical records and practicing evidenced-based medicine, all of which are built into the SustiNet Plan and all of which we strongly support.

BCAC urges the state legislature to pass HB 6305 and implement the SustiNet Plan. SustiNet will not only provide significant cost-savings to the state, but it will be a lifesaver for many Connecticut residents. The Census estimates that 377,000 residents do not have health insurance.

2470 Fairfield Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06605 • (203) 549-0075 • FAX (203) 549-0203
www.bcacct.org

Every day, I meet people who have just lost their jobs and their health coverage. I meet small business owners struggling to make ends meet. I meet others who are working but who cannot afford the high cost of health insurance. Just last week I met a mother who teaches English as a second language. She teaches in several different locations but because the positions are considered part-time, she does not qualify for health benefits. Her daughter, who is now a college sophomore, was on HUSKY. But her part-time jobs put her mother over-income for the program for herself and she has been without health insurance for 25 years.

Mr. J has two children. He recently lost his job as a mechanic. He was able to stay on Cobra because of the federal stimulus program that paid 65% of the cost of his premium. But the subsidy is about to end and he cannot afford the health insurance premium of over $1,000 each month. His wife will be losing her job the end of December. Mr. J's two children qualify for HUSKY, but he and his wife are just over-income. His wife has chronic health problems and Mr. J is very worried that he won't be able to pay for the medical care she needs. He asked me, "When will I be able to get health insurance I can afford? When? I can't wait much longer."

Many of us, like Mr. J., cannot wait much longer. We believe that SustiNet is the solution that Connecticut needs for its families and for its economy. SustiNet will offer us a health care plan that will give us peace of mind. It will keep us healthy and take care of us when we are sick. And it will save the state millions of dollars. It must move forward. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Submitted by

Barbara Edinberg
Director of Research
Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition
bedinberg@bcacct.org