



CONNECTICUT AFL-CIO

56 Town Line Road, Rocky Hill, CT 06067

860-571-6191

fax: 860-571-6190

Testimony of Lori Pelletier, Secretary-Treasurer

Connecticut AFL-CIO

Before the Joint Public Hearing, February 14, 2011

Senators Crisco, Musto and Stillman, and Representatives Megna, Tercyak, and Ritter, my name is Lori Pelletier and I serve as the Secretary-Treasurer of the Connecticut AFL-CIO and I am here to testify on behalf of our 900 affiliated local unions representing 220,000 members who reside in all 169 of our cities and towns.

The Connecticut AFL-CIO has a long and proud history of supporting a healthcare system which serves the people and not the profiteers. One of the key issues surrounding negative job growth in our state and nation is the exploding costs associated with healthcare. One way to contain this is for government to take on the responsibility for keeping costs down. The bills before you today can do just that and that is why I am here to testify in favor of these bills:

H.B. No. 6308 (RAISED) AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE CONNECTICUT HEALTHCARE PARTNERSHIP, and **H.B. No. 6322 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING STATE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PURCHASING.** (HS) The passage of these bills should be a no-brainer. Opening up the large pool the State currently has to municipalities and small businesses is a non-cost way to help both groups. Pooling is an age old concept; from CVS to UTC to the State of Connecticut dollars are saved by making your purchasing larger. It's nothing to be afraid of, we should just think of it as bulk purchasing for healthcare and prescription drugs. These are good bills and will become a good policy.

S.B. No. 921 (RAISED) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A STATE HEALTH INSURANCE EXCHANGE, and **H.B. No. 6323 (RAISED) AN ACT MAKING CONFORMING CHANGES TO THE INSURANCE STATUTES PURSUANT TO THE FEDERAL PATIENT PROTECTION AND AFFORDABLE CARE ACT, AND ESTABLISHING A STATE HEALTH PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM.** These two pieces of the proposed legislation make Connecticut compliant with the federal healthcare law and we need to act on these now. In a year where every dollar of revenue available is necessary, passing these bills will allow us to reap the rewards from the Federal level that our Congressional delegation worked so hard to secure.

H.B. No. 6305 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUSTINET PLAN. (PH) Connecticut's families have been waiting for years for a sustainable, portable and pocketbook friendly healthcare reform law. SUSTINET is just that bill. Too many families have to make choices about their lives based on healthcare, not hours of work, or vacation time or pay rate but healthcare. Our current healthcare system is crushing families and crushing our progress as a nation.

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Fifty years ago healthcare wasn't the financially crippling issue it is today for a number of reasons including non profit insurers in the system to keep for-profits insurers honest, all employers had to compete with a heavily unionized workforce who had negotiated healthcare benefits in their contracts, and corporate responsibility actually meant something. But over the course of time, benefits have eroded and workers have lost ground as employers seeking to maximize profit have done so at the expense of family healthcare. Once and for all we should take this burden out of the for-profit system and provide Connecticut's working families with the safety net they deserve. SUSTINET is a safety net.

The work done to get us to this point was not done in a vacuum but under a very powerful microscope. The recommendations by the SUSTINET board are clear and concise. Slowing the growth of public and private health care costs, expanding access to affordable, high-quality, comprehensive coverage for Connecticut residents, implementing a delivery system and payment reforms that will benefit state residents, providing Connecticut employees and individuals with a new health plan option, improving access to care among low-income residents, and reducing racial and ethnic disparities related to health care access and quality.

We appreciate the committees holding this very important public hearing and we look forward to working with this General Assembly to get these bills passed and signed into law.