Service, Education, Advocacy

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Good Morning, Chairman and members of the Joint Committees. My name is Domenique Thornton. I am the General Counsel and Director of Public Policy for the Mental Health Association of CT, Inc., (MHAC). MHAC is a 100-year old private non-profit dedicated to service, education and advocacy for people with mental health disabilities. Thank you for the opportunity to tell you why I am strongly supporting all of the bills for joint favorable passage at today's pubic hearing. This set of ground breaking legislative proposals reforms the health insurance landscape in Connecticut, putting the emphasis on coordinated health care delivery and wellness not sickness insurance. These reforms will undoubtedly make health insurance more affordable and accessible. In addition Connecticut residents can expect to enjoy better health outcomes.

Also importantly these proposals will save the state money and bring new federal dollars to Connecticut in addition to putting Connecticut in the forefront of national health reform that slows cost growth and delivers better quality health care improving the care residents throughout the state. Currently, the Connecticut state government spends about $8 billion annually on health care coverage for state employees, retirees, Medicaid recipients and other populations. $8 billion is almost half the state budget. You must seize this opportunity to act now to slow heath care costs while improving healthcare delivered. With Federal health care reform, Connecticut taxpayers will save by replacing current state spending on HUSKY and Medicaid with newly-available federal dollars. These proposal will make Connecticut eligible for a 90%

match in federal dollars under the Affordable Health Care Act. By coordinating healthcare services and emphasizing wellness through primary care delivery, Sustinet is poised to save dollars by reducing the overall costs of chronic co-morbid conditions that often go untreated in the current healthcare system until there is a costly health crisis.

Costs will also be reduced for Connecticut's employers. The Connecticut Heathcare Partnership proposed in H.B. 6308, to allow non-state public employers, municipal-related employers, small employers and non-profit employers to join the state employee health plan will save money by create larger pools among which to spread the risk of healthcare to help lower the costs of insurance. It will also provide more choices in healthcare options for employees.

The same can be said of the State Prescription Drug Purchasing Plan to lower costs by taking advantage of larger group purchasing power. I would only request that the Preferred Drug List safeguards that we have in place already in Connecticut be adopted into H.B. 6322 to protect the process that insures that recipients will have access to a greater choice of drugs and not be forced to take generic only. I would also like to request that H.B. 6323 be amended to ensure that "each such group policy shall comply with the provisions set forth in the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008, P.L. 110-343."

Thank you.