



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT**  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

**TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE**  
**March 15, 2011**

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***House Bill 6587 - An Act Concerning The Department Of Social Services' Establishment Of A Basic Health Program***

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The Affordable Care Act (ACA) offers states multiple approaches to providing health insurance coverage for low-income individuals, including the population with income **between 133 and 200 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL)**. In 2014, this population will be eligible for subsidized coverage in the Health Insurance Exchange, or states may elect to establish a Basic Health Program (BHP) for this population as an alternative to the Exchange. House Bill 6587 seeks to compel the Department of Social Services to implement such a program.

In Connecticut, we have already made an unambiguous statement about our commitment to ensuring that meaningful health care coverage is extended to all residents. Because the population we are discussing today is particularly vulnerable, our administration is highly motivated to establish coverage options that are affordable, comprehensive, and very well coordinated. The Basic Health Program deserves serious consideration as a means to transition people from Medicaid without gaps in coverage or disruptions in care. However, we will not be able to achieve that goal without complete information from all necessary sources.

I have been in conversation about the Basic Health Program with our colleagues at the US Department of Health and Human Services and with colleagues from other federal agencies. I have been advised by both that federal authorities have not yet settled important questions about relevant ACA provisions, and to wait for additional information before proceeding with the Basic Health Program. The information that will be forthcoming includes detail about the minimum essential benefits and the cost of subsidies in the Exchange.

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This month, a report prepared by the Urban Institute for the *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*-funded *State Coverage Initiatives* also addressed this very issue. According to the paper's author, Stan Dorn, "the BHP option deserves serious consideration." Dorn concluded:

*"State decisions about whether to implement the BHP option will be affected by guidance the federal government has not yet issued to interpret ACA."*

Our administration is committed to applying a thoughtful and careful approach to improving the affordability and continuity of coverage for low-income residents of Connecticut. The Basic Health Program is one of the issues being analyzed under the federal Insurance Exchange Planning Grant and we are working closely with the federal government to manage our progress implementing health care reform.

It is imperative that we analyze the true effects and implications of policy decisions before enacting legislation – particularly when, as with the Basic Health Program, we have ample time and are being encouraged by the experts to wait.

I look forward to working with the committee on this issue.