



**TESTIMONY OF
GRIFFIN HOSPITAL
BEFORE THE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
Tuesday, March 15, 2011**

**SB 1013, AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS
CONCERNING HUMAN SERVICES**

Griffin Hospital appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony concerning **SB 1013, AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING HUMAN SERVICES**. Griffin Hospital opposes SB 1013.

Griffin Hospital is a full service acute care community hospital serving a primary service area that includes Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Derby, Oxford, Seymour and Shelton with a combined population of 107,000. Griffin employs 1,357 with 282 active and courtesy members of its medical staff. In the 2010 fiscal year Griffin served 7,719 inpatients and close to 40,000 Emergency Department patients. Griffin is the largest employer in the Lower Naugatuck Valley region. Salaries and benefits paid exceed \$67 million annually.

SB 1013 provides the details for implementing the proposed state budget. Griffin Hospital is asking you to oppose this bill because it imposes a 5.5 percent tax on hospitals and makes a number of other reductions and changes to the Medicaid program that will negatively affect Griffin Hospital and the community and patients we serve. In fact, SB 1013—in combination with the budget proposal that recommends a cut of \$83 million in funding from the Uncompensated Care and DSH pools—threatens our hospital's ability to serve our community.

The impact of the 5.5% provider tax and cuts to the Uncompensated Care and DSH pools on Griffin Hospital would total \$1,302,298. In fiscal year 2010 which ended September 30, 2010, Griffin Hospital reported a gain from operations of \$1,374,485. Achieving even that very modest gain required an expense reduction that included eliminating positions, a pension plan freeze and implementing non-salary expense reductions. The proposed cuts in SB 1013 would singularly eliminate the modest gain achieved last fiscal year. Add federal Medicare reimbursement cuts and an increasing unwillingness on the part of commercial insurers to cover government reimbursement shortfalls to the equation and Griffin will be facing the possibility of a significant financial loss that would affect our ability to maintain services and care at levels that meet the expectations of those we serve and place the hospital in financial jeopardy.

Throughout its history Griffin has fulfilled its commitment and demonstrated concern about the welfare of our employees and the patients we serve, community development and health, human rights, empowering health care consumers through education and information, public reporting and transparency, and providing a community benefit.

Griffin Hospital benefits the communities it serves in myriad ways by providing more than \$800,000 in Community Health Improvement Services, subsidizing the care provided to patients

enrolled in the Medicare, Medicaid, and other public programs by approximately \$7.3 million per year, providing \$3 million of free care annually and providing health professionals with education at a cost of \$980,564 annually to help prepare the next generation of caregivers. In total, Griffin Hospital provides nearly \$13.7 million in community benefit.

Griffin strives to promote community health and wellness while closing racial, ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic gaps in health status. Griffin's Department of Community Outreach and Parish Nursing fulfills its healthy community mission and goals. Through this department, Griffin Hospital sponsors and provides operational leadership for the Valley Parish Nurse Program, one of the largest parish nurse initiatives in the country. Parish nurses are persons of faith who are experienced registered nurses, and who have received special education in holistic health care.

Last fiscal year the department and the parish nurses served 53,248 people. Services included 14,360 people who received health screenings, 10,010 referrals to needed services, 33,264 attendees at Education and Wellness programs and 3,884 people trained in CPR.

In addition the department in its role as the coordinator of the Greater Naugatuck Valley Safe Kids Chapter provided and fitted 1,511 free bike helmets to children, distributed 3,600 free Drug, Alcohol and Smoking Prevention Calendars, provided 353 infant booster car seats and processed 547 children through the CHIP – Childhood Identification Program.

One parent comment demonstrates the value of the program – quoting: *“I wanted to share with you a story about the Calendar Program conducted by your staff. My daughter is a 3rd grade student and has cystic fibrosis. She has to take several pills a day to manage her condition. Recently she asked if her specialist had changed her medication. She told me that the pill didn't look right. It was larger and the number on it was “30” instead of “15”. She knew that it wasn't right. The pharmacist had filled the bottle with the wrong dosage. She told me that the first thing that popped in her head was the class at school about pills and how you should never take something that's not right. Your program saved my daughter from being very sick. I can't thank you enough for sponsoring this program and your staff for getting this message out to children. You really are making a difference.*

Obviously these community benefit services are among the first to be looked at when forced to explore expense reductions to improve financial performance. It would be unfortunate to diminish these services that are so well received by the community Griffin serves and truly impact health status and quality of life.

Griffin Hospital understands that Governor Malloy is facing an unprecedented state budget deficit and has the tough job of balancing needs and resources. We are all too familiar with the tough choices he must make. However, we know that imposing a hospital tax or eliminating funding for uncompensated care will hurt the health of Connecticut citizens and the economy of our state.

This is not the time to dismantle the healthcare system. There are better options that provide the opportunity for expanding access, reducing the state deficit, reducing the cost shift to Connecticut businesses and employees, and helping address the hospital funding shortfall.

Griffin Hospital urges you to oppose SB 1013 and join us in saying NO to hospital taxes and funding cuts.