

TESTIMONY OF
St Vincent's Medical Center

For Human Services Committee
Tuesday, March 15, 2011

SB 1013, An Act Implementing the Governors Budget
Recommendations concerning Human Services

St Vincent's Medical Center appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony concerning SB 1013, AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNORS BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING HUMAN SERVICES.

ST VINCENT'S IS CONNECTICUT'S FIFTH LARGEST HOSPITAL AND OPERATES IN CONNECTICUT'S POOREST CITY. FOR MANY YEARS ST VINCENT'S PROVIDED CARE WHEN THERE WAS NO ALTERNATIVE OPTION. OUR CLINICS, AN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT CARING FOR NEARLY 80,000 PATIENTS, THE ONLY CHILDREN'S BEHAVIORAL CENTER IN SOUTHERN CONN FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN NEED OF MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT WITH COMMUNAL HOUSING AND OTHER TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMS BEING THEIR LIFELINE TO HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

ST VINCENT'S IS ALSO THE HOME OF SWIIM ACROSS THE SUPPORT PROGRAM WHICH HELPED OVER 125,000 STUDENTS DEAL WITH THEIR ADDICTION TO TOBACCO. THE SWIM'S OTHER STATE WIDE PROGRAMS INCLUDE THE FIRST RESPONDER FUND WHICH SUPPORTS POLICE, FIRE AND EMT PERSONNEL THROUGHOUT THE STATE. THE SWIM RAISES FUNDS TO HELP FIRST RESPONDERS WHO ARE FACING FINANCIAL NEED DURING THEIR ILLNESS. A 40 FOOT MOBILE VAN NOW PROVIDES ACCESS TO MAMMOGRAPHY FOR WOMEN WHO ARE FACING BARRIERS TO ACCESS DUE TO LOSS OF INSURANCE, TRANSPORTATION AND OTHER IMPEDIMENTS.

THE PROPOSED STATE BUDGET WILL IMPOSE A 5.5% TAX ON HOSPITALS AND SB 1013 ALSO RECOMMENDS A CUT OF \$83 MILLION IN FUNDING FOR THE POOLS WHICH WERE CREATED TO HELP HOSPITALS CARE FOR THE POOR WHEN NO ONE ELSE WOULD DO THIS WORK OF CHARITY. TECHNICALLY THE STATE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ITS CITIZENS, BUT THERE ARE NO PUBLIC HOSPITALS IN CONN AND THE HOSPITALS HAVE CARRIED THIS BURDEN FOR MANY YEARS. THE REASON THEY COULD DO THIS IS BECAUSE THE STATE HAS HELPED TO SUPPORT HOSPITALS IN THIS WORK. THESE CUTS BEG THE QUESTION OF HOW ARE HOSPITALS GOING TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE THIS LEVEL OF CHARITY WITH TRADITIONAL FUNDING BEING TAKEN AWAY.

BOTH HOSPITALS IN BRIDGEPORT HAVE SUPPORTED THE POOR BY PROVIDING SERVICES REGARDLESS OF THEIR ABILITY TO PAY. WE HAVE COLLABORATED AND WE WORK WITH OTHER COMMUNITY AGENCIES TO PROVIDE ACCESS FOR THOSE IN NEED. THIS BUDGET WILL PROVIDE RELIEF FOR THE HELP OF BALANCING THE BUDGET BUT AT WHAT COST. AS HOSPITALS INCUR MORE DEBT THEIR ABILITY TO PROVIDE THIS CARE WILL ERODE. WHILE WE UNDERSTAND THE NEED TO BALANCE THE BUDGET WE SIMPLY DO NOT UNDERSTAND HOW WE CAN SUCCEED IN THIS CHALLENGE IF THE WORK OF CARING FOR THE POOR CAN NO LONGER BE SUPPORTED.

THE WORK OF ST VINCENT'S ON BEHALF OF THE POOR IS BASED ON A LONG TRADITION. WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO CONTINUE THAT TRADITION DURING THIS DIFFICULT TIME, BUT WE ARE ASKING THAT YOU BECOME A STRONG VOICE TO ASK THAT THE SOLUTION BE OTHER THAN RAIDING THE DONATION BOX TARGETED TO THE

LESS FORTUNATE AMONG US. THE CHALLENGE OF BALANCING THE BUDGET IS KNOWN AND UNDERSTOOD, BUT WE SINCERELY HOPE THAT OTHER WAYS CAN BE FOUND THAT WILL PROTECT THE STATE AND NOT HURT THE POOR IN THE PROCESS.

THESE ARE DIFFICULT TIMES AND YOUR WORK IS MORE DIFFICULT THAN EVER. THE CUTS BEING TARGETED TO HOSPITALS WILL IMPACT THE LOCAL AND STATE ECONOMY, PLEASE HELP US BY OPPOSING SB 1013. THOSE WHO HAVE NOWHERE ELSE TO GO BUT THE HOSPITAL WILL THANK YOU BECAUSE THEY KNOW BEST THAT WE ARE THE LAST RUNG IN THE FREE CARE LADDER.

THANK YOU FOR ALLOWING ME TO BE HEARD ON THIS IMPORTANT SUBJECT.

SINCERELY,

RONALD J BIANCHI

CORPORATE SENIOR VP