AARP Testimony

H.B. 6308-- An Act Establishing the Connecticut Healthcare Partnership

February 14, 2011

AARP supports health care pooling through the state employee health insurance program to address the high costs and lack of choice that individuals and small-group purchasers face. We must ensure that all Connecticut residents have access to quality, affordable health care. This includes the 70,405 uninsured Connecticut residents age 50-64, among the fastest growing group of uninsured.

H.B.6308 opens the state insurance program to public non-state employees, small employers and nonprofit employees. AARP believes that the quality of the state employee health insurance plans coupled with the increased bargaining power and reduced administrative costs associated with a larger state plan pool should allow employees of municipalities, non-profits, and small businesses greater access to quality affordable health care. This is critically important for the families and employers in Connecticut now spending on average more than over $13,400 per year in health care premiums for family coverage.[1]

We believe that H.B. 6308 also would result in savings to municipalities. By opening up the state employee health insurance plan to municipalities that voluntarily choose to participate, towns could decrease their health care costs and provide a richer health care benefit to their employees. The same is true for non-profit organizations and small businesses that choose to participate. These health care savings are particularly beneficial during this time of fragile economic recovery. It could make the difference for employers struggling with insurance costs that might otherwise drop coverage all together or raise the employee share of premiums, increase deductibles and co-pays or cut benefits.

AARP supports the new coverage option proposed in H.B. 6308. We believe that the health reform work already underway in our state has positioned us to take the lead nationally on health care reform initiatives. AARP has long advocated that life-saving health care is a right, not a privilege. AARP believes that all individuals have a right to health care services when they need them; coverage that provides adequate financial protection against health care costs; high quality health care; a reasonable choice of health care providers; and the financing of the system should be equitable, broadly based and affordable to all.

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[1] Connecticut Quick Health Facts 2010, AARP Public Policy Institute (July 2010).