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Testimony before the Public Health, Human Services, and Insurance and Real Estate Committees

H.B. 6305 – An Act Concerning the Implementation of the Sustinet Plan

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

Submitted by Maggie Adair, Deputy Director
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This testimony is submitted to the Insurance and Real Estate, Human Services, and Public Health Committees. I am Maggie Adair, Deputy Director of the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS). CAHS is a statewide nonprofit organization that works to end poverty and to engage, equip, and empower all families in Connecticut to build a secure future.

CAHS is testifying in support of **H.B. 6308 – An Act Establishing the Connecticut Healthcare Partnership**. We commend Speaker of the House Chris Donovan for his leadership role in his efforts to make health care more accessible and affordable for municipalities, nonprofits, and small businesses. CAHS has testified and spoken publicly in support of the pooling proposal in the past, and we see the Speaker's work on this issue as critical in moving toward broader health care reform.

CAHS is also testifying in support of **H.B. 6305 – An Act Concerning Implementation of the Sustinet Plan**. For several years, advocates participated in the healthcare4very1 campaign to enact Sustinet, the most complete Connecticut-specific plan for universal health care ever presented to the Legislature. In 2009, Sustinet legislation was passed that authorized the development of an implementation plan. For months, committed stakeholders have met in working groups to research, think through, and come up with implementation steps. Lt. Governor Nancy Wyman and State Comptroller Kevin Lembo are commended for their leadership in leading this tireless effort. We also applaud the Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut for its leadership, tenacity, and vision in producing the Sustinet plan.

The groundwork is now done and it's now time to implement the plan. Sustinet is the product of the best thinking of experts and the combined ideas of many stakeholders. With federal health care reform passed and in the process of being phased in, and with the complementary planning under Sustinet, Connecticut is in an unusually unique position to create a comprehensive health care system. **Connecticut must not shrink from this challenge and this great opportunity.**

Sustinet offers a high-quality health insurance plan that promotes healthy competition in the marketplace through new choices, and a new level of accountability and transparency. It invests heavily in evidence-based prevention strategies to keep people healthy, lower costs, and promote sustainability of the health care system. Sustinet addresses the uninsured and underinsured. It addresses inefficiencies, employs best practices that tackle care coordination and communication, and ultimately keep us healthier and saves us all money.

Sustinet proposes smart and logical ideas. For example, every person would have a medical home. What this means is one medical professional would manage a person's health care needs. Having a medical home would

result in better coordination, avoid duplication of service, ensure appropriate care, and eliminate wasted health-care dollars.

A cornerstone of Sustinet is the creation of a large pool to create a critical mass of people, thus creating leverage and lowering cost. The pooling concept has opponents, many from the business community. Pooling exists in the private market place. Why can't it exist in a quality public health insurance plan?

Another key feature about Sustinet is choice. There is no mandate to participate in Sustinet. Workers can choose to remain with their current employer-sponsored health care plan. Businesses can choose to offer their current plan or they can choose to join the Sustinet plan. CAHS thinks expansion of choice in the health care system is a good thing. **Choice is healthy for the market place.**

The current health care system is not sustainable. The ranks of the uninsured and underinsured continue to grow. Businesses are heavily burdened by the rising cost of providing health care coverage to their employees. Increasingly, small businesses are unable to provide health care coverage because they simply cannot afford it. As access to quality health care narrows, more and more people are not getting the health care they need, and they are getting sicker and sicker. As a result, the cost of treating much more serious conditions is going up. The health system is a drag on the economy and a drag on our people.

Connecticut is poised to leap ahead of other states by implementing Sustinet in conjunction with the components of national health care reform. Because of the work of national experts and the commitment by the Universal Health Care Foundation, Connecticut is ahead of the curve in the movement to build a new health care system. Connecticut has a great opportunity and it's critical that we do not pass it by. We cannot afford not to do this. Our people and our economy depend on it. **Sustinet is smart, it's right, and it's time.**

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to submit testimony today.