Testimony of Tom Swan

Executive Director of the CT Citizen Action Group (CCAG)

2/14/11

Good Afternoon, my name is Tom Swan and I am the Executive Director of the CT Citizen Action Group (CCAG). CCAG has over 20,000 member families and has consistently worked on health care issues over our 40 years of existence. On behalf of our members, I want to applaud you and the rest of Connecticut's elected leadership who are looking to lead on the implementation of the Affordable Care Act and not wasting time playing silly tea bagger games.

In addition to being the Director of CCAG, I have had the honor over the past several years of serving as the Co-Chair of the Connecticut HealthFirst Authority and the Statewide Primary Care Access Authority, which both were created by the legislature. Through these Authorities I had the pleasure of learning from hundreds of people from Connecticut who participated in the process of developing our reports and recommendations. Much of the legislation that you are considering today reflects the input I heard and represents common sense steps to improve our health care system, while making it more affordable.

There are four bills that CCAG strongly endorses today.

HB 6305 AAC Implementation of the SustiNet Plan: The SustiNet Plan embodies much of what we heard during the work of the Authorities in terms of medical homes and emphasis on prevention. It is the direct result of the legislature overriding Governor Rell's veto in 2009. It is a financially sound way for Connecticut to implement national reform and to redesign our health system in a way that emphasizes health. The Statewide Primary Care Access Authority, made up for the most part of leaders from various medical professions, unanimously endorsed the SustiNet Plan at its last meeting. CCAG strongly endorses the plan because this will put Connecticut in the lead on implementing national reform and will save taxpayers, consumers, employers and state millions of dollars while improving our health care system.

HB 6308 AA Establishing the Connecticut Healthcare Partnership: We all know that small businesses and municipalities do not have the same leverage that large employers and the state have to negotiate with insurers and providers. It is clear that health insurers' goals over the last decade have been to get purchasers in the small employer market to pay more for less coverage. The Partnership bill will give small employers an additional option that takes advantage of the state's purchasing power. The legislature has passed similar bills before

(including last session) and we are optimistic that the new administration will not be a tool of the insurance companies and will give small employers this option by signing the legislation.

HB 6322 AAC State Prescription Drug Purchasing: This is another sound idea whose time has come with the advent of a new administration. The state is by far the largest purchaser of prescription drugs in Connecticut. During tough economic times it is essential that we spend every penny wisely. We believe that Comptroller Lembo's estimated savings are probably at the low end of what is possible here and it would be a mistake for us not to pass this.

HB 6323 AA Making Conforming Changes in the Insurance Statutes Pursuant to the Federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Through passage this bill Connecticut will continue to play a leading role on the national reform implementation. This legislation will conform Connecticut's insurance market to reflect the national legislation, especially some consumer protections that will limit some of the most abusive insurance company practices.

This bill also establishes Connecticut's health insurance exchange. We support this version over the one in the SB 921. CCAG's criteria for evaluating any exchange proposal are : 1) publically operated; 2) Strong conflict of interest protections 3) It be an active purchaser, 4) has the same rules for plans inside as outside the exchange, and 5) includes a state based public option.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to working with you to make the promises of these pieces of legislation a reality.