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**CONNECTICUT STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 5608 AN ACT
CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY APPROPRIATE
STANDARDS IN HEALTH CARE SETTINGS**

PRESENTED TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

MARCH 2, 2011

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee, on behalf of the more than 7,000 physicians and physicians in training of the Connecticut State Medical Society (CSMS), thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony to you today in support of **House Bill 5608 An Act Concerning the Implementation of Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Standards in Health Care Settings**.

CSMS believes that the identification of health disparities among and within Connecticut's increasingly diverse population is central to providing quality patient medical care today. Understanding the differences in communicating with patients from different cultures, ethnic groups, and even religious backgrounds is critical today.

CSMS has responded to the need to engage in the efforts to reduce healthcare disparities. With funding from Connecticut Health Foundation, the state's largest independent health philanthropy dedicated to improving lives by changing health systems, CSMS implemented a two-year campaign to reduce racial and ethnic health disparities and to improve physician-patient communication. CSMS is proud of the hard work that the physicians in our state have done to identify and address their role in the elimination of racial and ethnic health care disparities.

The establishment of a comprehensive committee to ensure accountability in the adoption of Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Standards (CLAS) will allow for representatives of the broad spectrum of health care providers in the state, including physicians, to provide advice, guidance and input on monitoring the implementation of standards 4 to 7, inclusive, of the CLAS standards issued by the United States Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Minority Health.

CSMS would strongly recommend that this committee work with CSMS to identify physician representatives that have specific knowledge and interest in health care disparities and in culturally and linguistically appropriate medical care so that privately practicing physicians are well represented in any discussions looking at the practice of medical care in Connecticut