STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
March 2, 2011

Commissioner Jewel Mullen, MD, MPH, MPA

House Bill 5608 – AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY APPROPRIATE STANDARDS IN HEALTH CARE SETTINGS

The Department of Public Health supports the intent of House Bill 5608 concerning the implementation of CLAS standards in Connecticut's health care systems. It is imperative that public health and healthcare delivery systems address the diversity of cultures and language proficiencies among our 3.5 million residents.

The Department's Office of Multicultural Health and the Connecticut Multicultural Health Partnership have been working together to explain, promote, and train healthcare providers to meet the CLAS standards during the past four years. We support the legislature's direction for the Commission on Health Equity to support the state efforts with the needed monitoring of the adoption and practice of CLAS in Connecticut.

The Department requests a specific amendment to the bill, a clarification, and a concern for the Committee to consider as you develop the final version of the bill.

The Department requests an amendment to the title, statement of purpose, and language in the bill to be in compliance with the US DHHS Office of Minority Health language of CLAS standards as "Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health Care Settings" standards.

The Department suggests that the legislation establishing the Comprehensive Collaborative Committee specify the stakeholder representatives to be appointed to the Committee. For example, representatives from small and large, urban and rural health care systems and various consumer population groups should be included to contribute to the direction and responsibilities of the Committee. We welcome the opportunity to partner with the Commission and the Partnership to appoint appropriate Committee members.

The Department questions the need and authority for another body - a "self-monitoring" board - to ensure culturally competent health care access throughout the state. Cultural competency relies, in part, on CLAS standards but requires additional considerations for policy and operational implementation. We request clarification on the terms "ensure" and "health care access" in order to comply with final legislation.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's views on this bill.