



**AFRICAN-AMERICAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION  
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**Testimony before the Insurance and Real Estate Committee, Human  
Services Committee, Public Health Committee**

**Monday, February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

**11:00 AM in Room 2C of the LOB**

Good morning/afternoon Chairs and members of the Committee's of cognizance. My name is Frank Sykes the Legislative Analyst of the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC) a non-partisan state agency. This Commission is an advocate for the African-American community and accomplishes its mission primarily through research, policy analysis, advocacy and information sharing.

As a member of the Commission of Health Equity an organization committed to overcoming health disparities and a strong advocate for access to affordable and quality healthcare for all Connecticut's citizens this Commission voices support for *H.B. 6305 – An act concerning implementation of the Sustinet Plan*. For many African-Americans accessing health care coverage is not a choice but a rather a necessity. When one looks at the health care data across race and ethnicity it's easy to understand why. The most recent available data on the state's uninsured,

reports that roughly 17.3 percent of the uninsured are African-American.<sup>1</sup> More importantly as a group African-Americans experience the highest rates of cancer, diabetes, hypertension, HIV infection and obesity to name a few, based on data from the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH). For example compared to the white population, African-Americans are 2.79 times likely to be uninsured.<sup>2</sup> African-Americans have rates twice as high as any other race for the following preventable diseases: asthma, type 1 and type 2 diabetes, hypertension and lower extreme amputations.<sup>3</sup> Of course this list is not exhaustive. We must be reminded that these conditions remain the same even when negated by income, employment or class.

Furthermore the urgency for health care access is even greater now than ever before in view of overall higher employment rates for all races. For African-Americans unemployment rates in 2010 were almost twice the state average, 17.2 percent versus 9.2 percent.<sup>4</sup> These rates have been consistently above the state average for at least the last four years. This means that without proper intervention, the health conditions of Connecticut's citizens, most certainly minority groups, are likely to worsen in years to come.

Therefore in view of these findings the Sustinet plan is needed. It seeks to provide affordable, comprehensive health coverage for every Connecticut resident, reduce the costs of care for virtually all residents and promotes health care quality. In conclusion we encourage and support any efforts at the federal, state or local level to make insurance more accessible and affordable to all Connecticut's citizens and we urge the legislature to ensure passage of this bill.

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<sup>1</sup> **Connecticut Department of Public Health** –The 2009 Connecticut Health Disparities Report

<sup>2</sup> **Connecticut State Conference of NAACP** – A Health Status Report on African-Americans in Connecticut

<sup>3</sup> **Connecticut State Conference of NAACP** – A Health Status Report on African-Americans in Connecticut

<sup>4</sup> **Bureau of Labor Statistics** - Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population by sex, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and detailed age, 2010 annual averages p — continued, <http://www.bls.gov/lau/ptable14full2010.pdf>

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.