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CITIZENS FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY  
*Corporate Responsibility Campaign*

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

My name is Karen Schuessler and I am the Director of Citizens for Economic Opportunity (CEO). CEO is a coalition of community and labor groups addressing health care reform and corporate responsibility.

I strongly support H.B. 6305 and I am here today as a very proud resident of Connecticut because I live in a state that is leading the way on health care reform. It has been nearly a century since Theodore Roosevelt first called for health care reform. Since then nearly every President and Congress, whether Democrat or Republican has attempted to meet this challenge and our failure to fix this problem has led us to a breaking point. That is why I am so pleased that I live in a state that is taking a leadership role in reforming health care and serving as a role model for other states.

There are those who say that we do not need to pass a state health care reform bill, that federal reform will solve all of the problems. That is not true. Passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and Phase I of Sustinet in 2009 has laid the groundwork for Connecticut to utilize federal resources to address our health care problems. According to the Urban Institute, Connecticut could be at the front of the line to attract \$800 million in federal dollars. Sustinet is the vehicle that will implement the changes.

What threatens our economy is not health care reform, it is health care costs that are threatening our economy. Connecticut spends approximately \$7 billion a year on health care. Despite what the critics are saying and the fears they are spreading, the scariest thing we can do is do nothing. By doing nothing, we will continue to see Connecticut residents lose their health insurance every day and premiums will continue to skyrocket. Sustinet is expected to slow cost growth by one percentage a year which will result in a savings of \$355 million in 2014 and \$500 million a year in 2019. Sustinet will save the average person \$875 per year in premiums and out-of-pocket expenses.

Connecticut could become the first state in the union to implement a public option. A public plan will inject competition into the system which will provide lower costs and better outcomes as consumers will be able to shop for the best deal.

Despite the \$7 billion dollars a year Connecticut spends on health care, there were still an average of 377,000 uninsured people living in Connecticut in 2008 and 2009. Without Sustinet, this trend will continue and nearly 390,000 people in the state will be uninsured by the end of the decade.

Let's pass Sustinet and show the rest of the nation how Connecticut can reform health care, cut costs and save lives. In years to come I know we will look back and say that this was the moment when we took action and made the changes we needed to provide quality, affordable health care to all Connecticut residents for generations to come.

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