

Testimony before Public Health, Insurance and Real Estate, and
Human Services Committees Joint Hearing
February 14, 2011

Good morning Committee Chairs and Members. Thank you for this opportunity to speak on such an important topic. I am Mary Moninger-Elia, Connecticut Staff for the Alliance for Retired Americans, with membership of about 53,000 in Connecticut and over 4 million nationwide.

Retirees have experience advocating for health care reform. This is not a new battle, but we are getting closer to a resolution, which is why I am speaking in support of HB 6305, the implementation of Sustinet and HB 6308 establishing the Connecticut Healthcare Partnership.

As retirees, we are concerned about what we will be leaving for our children and grandchildren. Affordable, accessible, quality health care is certainly one crucial thing we want to pass on to the next generation. Sustinet is an opportunity to do that and I urge you to pass its implementation.

Health care insurance was once a benefit of working for almost any firm or small business, and so workers enjoyed the security of knowing that they could manage the health needs of their families. However, the climate of the last few decades that brought hostile take-overs, downsizing, out-sourcing of jobs, and the need for higher and higher corporate profits fed into the financial crisis and caused the loss of health care coverage for many families. The situation is abysmal and unsustainable.

Sustinet will offer the promise of controlling those rising costs while keeping our families healthy. The focus on preventative care and management of chronic illnesses, and covering programs to fight public health problems like obesity, will stretch our health care dollars. Medical homes and coordination of care just make sense. Electronic medical records will not only save money but it

should reduce errors and overlapping treatment. The Sustinet Board and the hundreds of people who volunteered their time to put flesh on the bones of the concept passed in 2009 should be commended for their work and this legislation that came from their recommendations should be passed.

Connecticut should be in the forefront of insurance improvements and we certainly want to be the best at health care for our residents. Sustinet will help us position Connecticut to be the model for the country and gather funding available from federal health care reform to help us finance our plan. The pooling of many into a large risk pool helps small businesses and individuals, and, as towns move into the pool, it will help with local property taxes. And there are protections of the Sustinet pool, so that adverse selection cannot occur. It just makes sense.

I watched the presentations by Stan Dorn of the Urban Institute and others televised from this building on public access TV. I'm sure many of you were there for those briefings. Listening to the description of how Sustinet would work, the increase in choices people will have and the projected cost savings for Connecticut I felt like we are on the verge of solving an issue we have wrestled with for years.

Sustinet should have been passed years ago, but by all means, pass it now and work for it to make its way to the Governor's desk, and leave something significant to future generations.

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