



State of Connecticut  
SENATOR DONALD E. WILLIAMS, JR.  
*Twenty-ninth District*  
President Pro Tempore

Testimony of Senator Donald E. Williams, Jr.

Before the Human Services, Insurance and Real Estate and Public Health Committees

February 14, 2011

**On House Bill 6305, *An Act Concerning the Implementation of the Sustinet Plan*,  
Senate Bill 921, *An Act Establishing A State Health Insurance Exchange*, and  
House Bill No. 6323, *An Act Making Conforming Changes To The Insurance Statutes  
Pursuant To The Federal Patient Protection And Affordable Care Act, And Establishing  
A State Health Partnership Program.***

Senators Musto, Crisco and Stillman, Representatives Tercyak, Megna and Ritter, and distinguished members of the Human Services, Insurance and Real Estate and Public Health Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 6305, *An Act Concerning the Implementation of the Sustinet Plan*, Senate Bill 921, *An Act Establishing A State Health Insurance Exchange*, and House Bill 6323, *An Act Making Conforming Changes To The Insurance Statutes Pursuant To The Federal Patient Protection And Affordable Care Act, And Establishing A State Health Partnership Program.*

As we all know, health care quality, health care access and health care costs are among the most pressing issues facing individuals and businesses here in Connecticut and across the country. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, 11% of Connecticut residents were uninsured in 2009 – that is 380,400 Connecticut residents. Further, the rising costs to those with insurance – whether to individuals or to employers – are clearly unsustainable. Health care has become not just a matter of personal well being, but of economic stability and job growth as well. Thus, I commend you all for scheduling this joint hearing early in the legislative session to consider some of the most promising means of addressing these urgent health care issues.

The agenda today highlights the need for joint efforts at the national and state levels to effectively tackle the shortcomings of our current health care system - or as some would say - our lack of a health care system. There are the two bills before you that lay out a framework for the creation of a health insurance exchange ("Exchange") as required by

the Federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Exchanges are entities intended to create a more organized and competitive market for health insurance by offering a choice of plans, establishing common rules regarding the offering and pricing of insurance, and providing information to help consumers better understand the options available to them.

Establishing the Exchange this session must be one of our top priorities. The federal law has given us great latitude in establishing our Connecticut Exchange, and SB 921 and HB 6323 demonstrate two possible approaches. I stand ready to work with you and with the Governor's office to examine the options and to take advantage of the opportunities available to Connecticut.

You are also hearing today the bill that implements the final report of the Sustinet Health Partnership Board of Directors (the "Board"). First, let me say what a remarkable effort that report represents and express my appreciation to the Board and to the dozens of other participants for the time and expertise they contributed to make this possible. Sustinet's vision to assure affordable health care coverage for all Connecticut residents while implementing health care delivery reforms that will slow the growth in costs is one to which I fully subscribe; making that vision a reality is not a luxury, but a necessity.

Of course, we must focus not only on long term benefits, but on the current fiscal climate and budgetary constraints. To that end, I believe that the details of the Sustinet estimated savings of \$226M to \$277M per year starting in 2014 are crucial. It is these savings that will enable implementation of the many reforms outlined in the plan and additional savings after that.

Too many of our fellow Connecticut residents are suffering today due to loss of employment, which in many cases also means loss of health insurance. We must focus on job creation and business development in our state, both of which may depend on our ability to lower health care costs. Given that our business taxes are the 5<sup>th</sup> lowest in the country<sup>1</sup>, we are appropriately turning our attention to our high healthcare costs and our high energy rates. Sustinet offers a promising frame for tackling one of our most costly and intractable problems.

Again, I thank you for this opportunity to testify and commend you for your diligent efforts to help Connecticut residents and businesses lead the way to high quality health care that is affordable for us all.

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<sup>1</sup> Rodriguez, Orlando, M.A. & Shelley Geballe, J.D., M.P.H., "Connecticut's Business Taxes in Context: A Summary of Ernst & Young's National Survey of State and Local Business Taxation," Connecticut Voices for Children (May 2010), available at <http://ctkidslink.org/publications/bud10businesstaxes.pdf>.