



**Testimony of Kenneth Robinson, MD, Medical Director and Program Director  
LIFE STAR Helicopter Program, Hartford Hospital  
SUBMITTED TO THE  
Appropriations Committee  
February 17, 2012**

**RE: Elimination of LIFE STAR Medicaid Reimbursement**

As Medical Director and Program Director for LIFE STAR at Hartford Hospital, I am again appealing to members of the Committee on behalf of Hartford Hospital, the citizens of Connecticut, especially those on Medicaid, and other Connecticut hospitals served by LIFE STAR, to preserve the funding that remains in the state budget for costs associated with operating this critical service.

I am here to ask you to ensure that the steps you took to protect some of funding for this life saving program remain in the Governor's budget. Through your efforts the elimination of the \$1.4 million state grant to LIFE STAR was replaced with a rate increase in State Medicaid reimbursement sufficient to cover costs up \$600,000.

The request for an increase was made to the Department of Social Services in June, 2011 but never granted and we were informed that the \$600,000 was to be eliminated from the DSS budget based on the pending union negotiations. As we know, the contracts were settled but LIFE STAR was never given the increase you authorized.

LIFE STAR has been in operation since 1985. In those 27 years we have flown close to 25,000 patients. We have been in every town in Connecticut and we have flown into every hospital in Connecticut. We are the only licensed air medical transport program in the state. We provide the highest level of out-of-hospital care available in Connecticut. In addition to cutting edge medical care, each year we provide a significant amount of outreach education, which includes scene safety presentations, civic presentations, injury prevention presentations and prom promise activities with local high schools. We have had contact with over 22,000 through our outreach programs.

We save countless lives each year and improve the health outcomes of more than 1200 patients every year. Nearly 20% of the patients we transport are Medicaid patients. The \$600,000 rate increase allocated last year would help us continue to provide this service to this growing population of patients, particularly since other reimbursements for this vulnerable population are being reduced. We know the Medicaid population will grow and LifeStar will be there to save the lives of those covered by Medicaid but we cannot sustain the costs without some support from the state. The evidence is clear. The program saves lives; it is run efficiently and has been recognized nationally as one of the best air ambulances programs in the country. Please acknowledge our work and the service we provide by retaining the rate adjustment in the state budget.

Thank You.