

Good afternoon honorable representatives of the committee,

My name is Daniel Hayes, and I am a student at UCONN School of Social Work. I have come before you today to offer testimony in support of H.B. 5013, An Act Concerning The Board Members Of The Connecticut Health Insurance Exchange. The Statement of Purpose at the end of this bill states that the legislation would make it so the Healthcare Advocate can be a voting member. According to their website, part of the mission of the Healthcare Advocate is "to serve and assist Connecticut's health insurance consumer, and to strive to ensure that the products and services available are adequate. This effort requires a multifaceted approach, including direct consumer advocacy and education, interagency coordination of benefits and a voice in the legislative process." Allowing the Healthcare Advocate to be a voting member would increase the efficiency of the Advocate's role in the legislative process in a more direct way. This bill should also add consumers and small businesses to the exchange board, as well as prevent powerful private market interests from making key decisions about public healthcare. The Healthcare Advocate is responsible for informing consumers as to their rights and responsibilities concerning managed care and does not stand to personally benefit from any decision made by a consumer. Those who represent private market interests have been a leading opposition to expanding access to healthcare in Connecticut. Health care accessibility is not a subject that needs a dissenting opinion in order to ensure fairness. What should be priority is making sure that there are people are on this Exchange who are dedicated to expanding access to healthcare, which would include the Advocate as well as consumers. As someone who has lived without healthcare ongoing and for years, I do not trust the leaders of opposition to make decisions that will positively impact my well-being. Please make sure that every day people, small business, and the Healthcare Advocate can make decisions instead. In conclusion, please pass H.B. 5013.