



Community Health Center Association of Connecticut

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Testimony of

THE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER ASSOCIATION OF CONNECTICUT (CHCACT)

Before

The Public Health Committee

Regarding House Bill 5527: An Act Concerning a Working Group to Study Health Care Reform

Presented by

Evelyn A. Barnum, J.D., Chief Executive Officer

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The Community Health Center Association of Connecticut (CHCACT) has the privilege of working with all Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) in Connecticut. FQHCs provide critical access and high quality primary care and preventive services to patients in underserved areas of our state, regardless of ability to pay. They are a large and absolutely critical component of Connecticut's health care delivery system. In 2011, 14 health centers in the state combined cared for over 328,000 unduplicated users and provided well over one and a half million visits.

CHCACT supports this legislation, which would add community health to the public policy conversations about health reform. Often lost in the debate over insurance coverage is the opportunity to implement real, evidence-based practices that improve public health. This working group would provide that forum, by convening a broad-based coalition of individuals to focus on community health programs, wellness initiatives, changes to healthcare delivery systems and issues related to chronic disease.

Over the past several years, CHCACT has been honored to participate in substantive discussion and changes to Connecticut's health system. We have represented the federally qualified health centers – and, importantly, the needs of their 300,000+ consumers – on the HealthFirst Authority, the Primary Care Access Authority, the Council on Medical Assistance Program Oversight (and various committees of such) and other policymaking and oversight bodies. We have provided valuable insight to these committees by bringing the perspective of the federally qualified health centers to the table, and we would be most pleased to do so on this working group as well.

Connecticut has an opportunity to make health reform about more than insurance. CHCACT applauds this Committee for its efforts with HB 5527 – efforts that could strengthen community health programs, like vaccinations, obesity reduction and access to oral health care. On behalf of

the patients and families currently served by FQHCs, we ask you to support this legislation through this Committee and to passage and implementation. *CHCACT*'s member community health centers are appreciative of the Committee's support and ongoing interest in preserving and improving the statewide system of care for Connecticut's residents.

Thank you.