

Testimony of the Connecticut Association of Directors of Health

In Support of Raised Bill 5527: An Act Concerning a Working Group to Study Health Care Reform

To the Distinguished Co-Chairs and Members of the Public Health Committee

March 21, 2012

Good afternoon, Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Patrick McCormack and I am President of the Connecticut Association of Directors of Health (CADH) and the Director of the Uncas Health District, serving the towns of Bozrah, Griswold, Lisbon, Montville, Norwich, Sprague, and Voluntown.

CADH, on behalf of Connecticut's local health departments, supports Raised Bill 5527, *An Act Concerning a Working Group to Study Health Care Reform*. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) offers unprecedented opportunities for public health. The ACA—for the first time—promotes a national strategy for prevention.

Specifically, it establishes the National Prevention, Health Promotion and Public Health Council to coordinate federal prevention, wellness, and public health activities; creates task forces on Preventive Services and Community Preventive Services to develop, update, and disseminate evidence-based recommendations on the use of clinical and community prevention services; creates a Prevention and Public Health Fund for prevention, wellness, and public health activities, including prevention research and health screenings, the Education and Outreach Campaign for preventive benefits, and immunization programs; and establishes a grant program to support the delivery of evidence-based and community-based prevention and wellness services aimed at strengthening prevention activities, reducing chronic disease rates and addressing health disparities, especially in rural and frontier areas.

It also eliminates cost-sharing for preventive services in Medicare and Medicaid; provides Medicare beneficiaries access to a comprehensive health risk assessment and creation of a personalized prevention plan; provides incentives to Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries to complete behavior modification programs; and requires Medicaid coverage for tobacco cessation services for pregnant women. Finally, it provides grants to small employers that establish wellness programs; provides technical assistance to evaluate employer-based wellness programs; and conducts a national worksite health policies and programs survey to assess employer-based health policies and programs.

Local health departments welcome the opportunity to study and make recommendations as outlined in the proposed legislations. Local health departments are already working to engage in health reform by building on their existing strengths. Particularly, potential opportunities for local public health include an expanded role in Medicaid enrollment and in outreach and enrollment for state health insurance exchanges; an expanded role in wellness programs; an enhanced role as health data and information experts for community; and a collaborative with nonprofit hospitals to conduct IRS-required community health needs assessments. Local health departments also look forward to working with the partners listed to safeguard eroding public health resources.

Accordingly, CADH supports Raised Bill 5527. CADH is a nonprofit organization comprised of Connecticut's 77 local health departments and districts. Local health directors are the statutory agents of the Commissioner of Public Health and are critical providers of essential public health services at the local level in Connecticut. Thank you for your consideration.