

March 16, 2012

Testimony before the Public Health Committee

**Bill# HB05514 An Act Concerning Various Revisions to the Public Health Statutes and Bill# SB0277, An Act Concerning a Council to Promote Collaboration between Local Health Departments and the Department of Public Health.**

Shannon Wiggins, University of Connecticut School of Social Work, Chrysalis Center-Soromundi Commons Shelter

Greetings honorable senators and representatives!

I am honored to be allowed to share my testimony today. My name is Shannon Wiggins. I am a student at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work program. I am employed at a state social service agency as well as being placed in my internship at a shelter for women in Hartford, CT. I have several years of experience working with an impoverished population. Many of them have faced the issue of lack of adequate healthcare.

My purpose for coming here today is to help advocate towards adequate health care for all, and to ensure that rehabilitation needs such as mental health and substance abuse treatment, be covered thoroughly through healthcare coverage plans. I am here today to testify on Bill# HB05514, An Act Concerning Various Revisions to the Public Health Statutes and Bill# SB0277, An Act Concerning a Council to Promote Collaboration between Local Health Departments and the Department of Public Health.

I am hopeful that through the revisions to the public health statutes and collaborations between local health departments and the Department of Public Health, that a suitable basic health plan for those who are working class and who are less fortunate to be able to afford and receive a good quality of health care. This issue continues to be a significant issue as many are afraid to be vigilant about the quality of care regarding their health due to the costs associated with the maintenance of care. I have personally observed this in working with women with children, who may be qualified for health care as it relates to their children's health care, however, they themselves are covered via spend down accounts, where the cost of their medical care cannot exceed the amount of income they bring in per month. Everyone should be given the opportunity for adequate health care, as this should be viewed as a basic need to human rights.

I would also hope that a collaboration between local health departments and the department of public health to come to a resolution on the quality of health care as it relates to health care clinics in poorer neighborhoods vs. those of the wealthier neighborhoods. I would only hope that everyone could be given an equal opportunity at quality health care. In addition to the quality of health care, I am advocating that this also extend to the benefit of the needs of both mental health and substance abuse. Too often have I seen where clients who suffer from both mental health and substance abuse issues being denied access to treatment due to having reaching the limit of treatment visits that is covered through their insurance, often leading them into going into a step down program, or leaving treatment all together.

Implementing a plan that addresses the above concerns would be beneficial, as it would provide low income citizens a basic health care plan to be able to meet their basic health, preventative health, mental health and substance abuse needs. It would alleviate many of the issues of homelessness if part of the issue could be resolved through addressing their mental health and substance abuse needs appropriately. As well as saving the state of Connecticut money by implementing rehabilitation programs to actually correct behaviors rather than incarceration.

In essence, making revisions to the public health statutes and building a collaboration between local health facilities and the department of public health, would only help the state financially rather than hurt. In addition to benefiting the state, it would help rehabilitate someone who is qualified as low income to enhance their health to becoming a healthy and productive citizen.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify on such an important issue. If there are any questions, I will be very happy to answer.