



**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
Friday, February 15, 2013**

**HB 6350, An Act Concerning The Budget For The Biennium Ending June 30, 2015,
And Other Provisions Relating To Revenue**

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **HB 6350, An Act Concerning The Budget For The Biennium Ending June 30, 2015, And Other Provisions Relating To Revenue.**

Before outlining our concerns, it's important to detail the critical role hospitals play in the health and quality of life of our communities. Connecticut's hospitals are more than facts and figures, and dollars and cents. Hospitals, at their core, are all about people. All of our lives have, in some way, been touched by a hospital: through the birth of a child, a life saved by prompt action in an emergency room, or the compassionate end-of-life care for someone we love. Or perhaps our son, daughter, husband, wife, or friend works for, or is a volunteer at, a Connecticut hospital.

Hospitals provide care to all people regardless of their ability to pay. Connecticut hospitals are the ultimate safety net providers, and their doors are always open.

Every day, healthcare professionals in hospitals see the consequences and health implications for individuals and families who lack access to care and coverage. Emergency departments are filled with individuals who cannot find a physician to care for them because they are uninsured or underinsured – or they are Medicaid beneficiaries and few physicians will accept the low rates paid by Medicaid. Throughout Connecticut, our emergency rooms are treating both those who have delayed seeking treatment because of inadequate or no coverage, and those who have no other place to receive care.

Thus, as frontline caregivers, Connecticut hospitals are absolutely committed to initiatives that improve access to safe, high-quality care and expand access to coverage. Connecticut hospitals stand ready to partner on Medicaid system reform and innovation to create effective solutions that offer a win for everyone: better access for patients, lower costs for the state, and better payment for providers. The ultimate goal is to establish a healthcare system through which coverage is affordable and sustainable, and access to care is guaranteed.

Hospitals are the safety net for many patients receiving behavioral health services. We share the frustration felt by many in the care continuum that, even when the key problems we face in addressing mental illness are well-defined and identified, there seems to be a paralysis in moving toward solutions. The reality in Connecticut is that there are often long waits and financial or resource limitations to accessing therapeutic/residential placement, appropriate clinical treatment services in the community, and appropriate supportive housing.

Connecticut hospitals offer mental health services in both inpatient and outpatient settings, as well as in their emergency departments. However, the problem of insufficient supply can be seen throughout the care continuum. It can take months to schedule an outpatient visit with an adolescent mental health specialist. While waiting for that important visit, the family is forced to hope that the situation does not escalate to the point of emergency room care, but sadly it often does. The system of care for those in need of behavioral health assistance needs attention.

Fortunately, Governor Malloy's proposed budget does provide much needed new and expanded services. The proposed budget calls for: (1) the establishment of health homes, which would better coordinate behavioral and physical healthcare for those in the care of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and (2) support services for 100 units of supportive housing. CHA supports these important initiatives.

Unfortunately, the proposed budget also makes significant reductions to hospital funding – cutting more than \$550 MILLION in the next biennium. These cuts will devastate hospitals. They will cause immediate and lasting damage to Connecticut's health and human services safety net, ***including mental health programs***—affecting patients, employees, and every community in the state.

CHA urges you to support the new and expanded behavioral health programs and oppose the significant cuts to hospital funding.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.