



Testimony of

Katherine S. Yacavone, President and Chief Executive Officer
Southwest Community Health Center, Inc.

Bridgeport Sites

968 Fairfield Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06605
(203) 330-6000

361 Bird Street
Bridgeport, CT 06605
(203) 330-6000

1046 Fairfield Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06605
(203) 330-6054

510 Clinton Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06605
(203) 366-4000

743 South Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06604
(203) 330-6010

**School Based
Health Centers**

Bassick High School
Central High School
Blackham School
Read School
Roosevelt School
Cesar Batalla

Homeless Shelters

Bridgeport Sites
CASA
Helping Hand
Pivot Ministries
Prospect House
Brooks Street Shelter
Harrison Apartments
Fairfield Site
Operation Hope

WIC Site

1020 Fairfield Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06605

On Governor Malloy's Budget Proposals Around Health and Hospitals

Good evening, Senators and Representatives, and thank you for this opportunity to testify regarding two specific line items in Governor Malloy's proposal for the Department of Public Health: school-based health centers and the Community Health Services line item, which provides grants to organizations that serve the uninsured.

Southwest Community Health Center is a federally qualified health center (FQHC) based in Bridgeport that serves over 20,000 people annually, delivering primary medical care, medical specialty care, mental health and substance abuse treatment and dental care. As the Committee may know, **FQHCs turn no patients away – regardless of ability to pay.** For Southwest, care is provided in a variety of locations – 18 total health center locations in our state's largest and poorest city.

I'd like to tell you a little bit about our patients:

- 1500 are homeless individuals who receive care at one of eight Health Care for the Homeless Clinics or 5 main sites;
- 2,400 are children seen at one of our six school-based health centers;
- 98% live below 200% of federal poverty level, which, for a family of four, means they are earning less than \$46,100;
- **28% are uninsured;**
- 88% identify as one or more racial/ethnic minority;
- 19% say they are best served in a language other than English.

So, it is challenging, yet rewarding, work to provide needed health care services – in multiple languages, for individuals with a lot of circumstances in their own lives that make it difficult for them to obtain health care.

Funding for treating the uninsured: The Department of Public Health's Community Health Services line item is proposed to be reduced \$684,000 in the first year, and still another \$493,000 in year two. This line item provides direct grants to FQHCs like Southwest to help compensate for our treatment of individuals who are uninsured. The rationale provided for this line item cut is that Connecticut will have much fewer uninsured individuals with the full implementation of the Affordable Care Act in 2014. However, I and others are concerned that our state will continue to have tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of uninsured people in 2014 – and that those who remain uninsured will be among the most challenging to serve. **I urge the Committee to reject the proposal to reduce this line item. Let the CT. Health Exchange data document the level of uninsured persons- after a successful implementation- by the end of 2014. Then a rational approach to establishing funding levels can be determined.**

School-Based Health Centers: I am also quite concerned with the Governor's proposal to reduce base funding support and eliminate planned expansion of school-based health centers in Connecticut. Southwest – like other organizations that operate school-based health centers – has found that serving children in the school offers barrier-free access to care, improves health outcomes and allows the children to maximize their time in school. **In 2012 SWCHC delivered over 15,000 visits to children in our 6 SBHCs, 26% of whom are uninsured. Without this grant, these visits would not have happened.** Importantly, in addition to medical care, school-based health centers provide critical access to both behavioral health services and dental care, both of which have been identified as needed services in the low-income population. This legislature is currently considering numerous proposals to improve access to mental health services; supporting school-based health centers is a proven way to help identify and address mental health issues early on in a child's life. **One cannot talk about expanding mental health services and then sever the artery that provides this care at its most accessible, local, service delivery point.**

I urge the Committee to restore funding for school-based health centers and the community line item health care grant.

Thank you and am pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Katherine S. Yacavone
President/CEO
SWCHC
2/15/13