



**Testimony of Juan Salazar, MD, MPH, Interim Physician-in-Chief,
Connecticut Children's Medical Center to the Appropriations Committee
Regarding the Department of Social Services budget for Fiscal Years 2014-2015
February 22, 2013**

Senator Harp, Representative Walker, members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I am Dr. Juan Salazar, and I was recently named Interim Physician-in-Chief at Connecticut Children's Medical Center. As a member of the Connecticut Children's Executive Management Team, I am here today representing the pediatric physicians and health care providers who strive each day to provide the best possible health care services to the children and adolescents of our region.

At Connecticut Children's, nothing is more important than a child's health. That's why all of the healthcare professionals at Connecticut Children's chose to become part of the only hospital in the region dedicated exclusively to children. As a center for vital research, a pioneer in new treatments, a leader in advanced technology, and a teacher of future pediatric professionals, Connecticut Children's is advancing the health and wellness of all of our children and adolescents, and fostering a healthier future for our state.

Our newly-created Office of Community Child Health will serve as a national model for delivery system redesign, producing efficiencies for the Connecticut Department of Social Services and attracting Medicaid demonstration funding through the Affordable Care Act. Connecticut Children's researchers also brought in nearly \$14 million in federal and private research dollars this year, contributing to the viability of the State's emerging bioscience corridor. I am currently funded by the National Institutes of Health to study how the Lyme disease bacteria can cause serious complications in children and adolescents, including meningitis and arthritis. In addition, my team has collaborated with investigators at the National Institutes of Health to study new and improved medications to treat children who are born with HIV.

Connecticut Children's relationship with HUSKY, the State's Medicaid program, is different than that of any other hospital in the State. More than half of our inpatient care, nearly two-thirds of our emergency care and almost 100% of outpatient HIV-care is devoted to children and adolescents who rely on HUSKY. As you are well aware, during the current economic downturn, those percentages have increased significantly as children have switched from private coverage to Medicaid.

In 2012, Connecticut Children's was paid only 72% of the cost incurred while providing care to children on HUSKY, resulting in a \$ 42 million shortfall. The State budget

included a \$10 million line item for Connecticut Children's; without that funding, the loss would have been \$52 million.

As you know, late last year, the Connecticut General Assembly approved a series of State budget cuts that included a \$7.5 million annual reduction in Connecticut Children's Medicaid revenue. The Governor's proposed \$5 million increase in funding for Connecticut Children's will offset some of the \$7.5 million annual cut and acknowledges the unique role that Medicaid plays in pediatric medicine. I urge you to include this funding in the new biennial budget so our children can continue to have access to the health care they deserve.

In 2013, the Connecticut General Assembly is paying close attention to the issue of mental health care. Connecticut Children's faces the long-term, growing, dangerous and unacceptable issue of children and adolescents in mental health crisis who have to be admitted to our emergency room for days and in some cases weeks. Over the past decade, the numbers of children in behavioral health crisis presenting for care in our Emergency Department has grown dramatically and consistently.

In working with various state agencies and Yale-New Haven Hospital, we have identified the long-term solution that is needed: the establishment of two units in the state (one for the north and one for the south) with child psychiatric assessment and management capabilities. I urge you to support and fund this solution.

We at Connecticut Children's firmly believe that all children and adolescents should have the health care they need to grow and lead healthy productive lives. It is now critically important for the State to recognize and provide coverage for those uninsured children who are often at highest risk. Inadequate coverage cannot help these children, making it impossible for providers to be able to afford to treat them. As a citizen of our State and health care provider at Connecticut Children's Medical Center, I firmly believe we have a responsibility to ensure the best possible care for our children.

Thank you.

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