



**TESTIMONY OF
SUSAN DAVIS, RN, ED.D
PRESIDENT & CEO
ST. VINCENT'S HEALTH SERVICES
BEFORE THE
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**

Friday, February 22, 2013

**HB 6350, AN ACT CONCERNING THE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING
JUNE 30, 2015, AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATING TO REVENUE**

I want to thank the members of the Appropriations Committee for the opportunity to speak on behalf of St. Vincent's Medical Center, our patients, and the community about the impact that the Governor's proposed state budget will have on the healthcare safety net in the state, and more specifically, on the communities in and around Bridgeport. For the record, my name is Susan Davis. I am the President and Chief Executive Officer of St. Vincent's Health Services. I also serve as the Chairwoman of the Board of Trustees of the Connecticut Hospital Association.

Although you will be hearing from several of my colleagues from other hospitals throughout the evening, I will speak to you today not only as a representative from a hospital serving the Greater Bridgeport healthcare safety net, but also on behalf of all Connecticut hospitals. The consistent message you will hear today from hospital leaders around the state is that the Governor's proposed budget will devastate our hospitals, our staffs, and the patients and communities we serve.

Those of us who work at St. Vincent's Medical Center understand that the Governor and state leaders are facing difficult choices addressing the projected budget deficit, while working to meet the needs of the people of Connecticut. Unfortunately, hospitals in Connecticut are all too familiar with having to make these same types of tough budget decisions, while at the same time providing high quality health care. This past December, in an effort to balance the fiscal year 2013 state budget, hospitals throughout the state were cut by over \$100 million. St. Vincent's Medical Center was cut by over \$4 million. These unexpected and drastic mid-year cuts forced hospitals such as St. Vincent's to make some very tough decisions.



In response to these cuts we have had to close programs that provide school services to students with Behavioral Health issues that are disruptive to other students and cannot stay in school districts around the region. We will also be closing a group home located in Stamford that provides housing to adults with Special Needs. We have reduced associate benefits and are looking at a 2% reduction in force. We are unable to invest in planned programs that would expand access to Behavioral Health, health navigation, and primary care to Medicaid patients in our community.

Now, the Governor has again turned to hospitals to close the state's anticipated deficit. This time, he is planning to cut funding to all Connecticut hospitals by almost \$550 million over the next two years. St. Vincent's Medical Center stands to lose over \$27 million over this same period.

Something has got to give. As a result of these proposed cuts to hospital funding, St Vincent's will have no choice but to cut services and programs. Unfortunately, and in order to ensure the financial viability of our hospital, we will have to look first at programs and services that are losing money. And more often than not, the programs and services to be cut will be the ones that help the neediest people in our communities. Hospitals will also be forced to evaluate their general level of spending on goods and services, which, in turn, will have an adverse impact on the local and regional economy. And finally, and perhaps most troubling, since the single largest expense for hospitals is staffing, it is clear that hospital jobs will be at risk, if the Governor's proposed cuts are allowed to take place.

Services that are desperately needed in our community such as access to primary care and Behavioral Health clinics will be further curtailed. We will be forced to consider closing our child and adolescent Behavioral Health inpatient beds in our Westport facility, closing our autism evaluation program, further reducing our workforce by at least 3%, and downsizing other services that include specialty care to the uninsured and underinsured. We know that these actions will severely impact access, and eliminate preventative and chronic care services. Unfortunately, this isn't the end of the list because what I have outlined only covers part of the \$27M in cuts proposed by the Governor for St Vincent's.

Connecticut hospitals stand ready to work with you to craft a budget that does not include these devastating cuts.

Our patients are relying on you. Our staff is relying on you. The businesses we support are relying on you. Our communities need you to protect hospital funding. As you develop the next biennial budget, we ask that you please protect Connecticut's hospitals. We are an economic engine for the state and the safety net for its residents.

Thank you for your consideration of our position.