



**TESTIMONY OF
Bridgeport Hospital
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**

On behalf of Bridgeport Hospital, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to **HB 6350, AN ACT CONCERNING THE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2015, AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATING TO REVENUE.**

Bridgeport Hospital is a 383-bed, full service, acute care teaching hospital that provides high-quality care to all our patients. Bridgeport Hospital also houses 42 additional beds that are licensed under Yale-New Haven Children's Hospital. In addition to nearly 600 active attending physicians representing more than 60 subspecialties, 235 medical/surgical residents and fellows, Bridgeport Hospital houses the only specialized burn care facility between New York and Boston, and is also the site of southern Connecticut's only multi-person Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy chamber, which aids in the treatment of stubborn wounds. Additionally, Bridgeport Hospital continues to be a safety net for our community by providing healthcare to our patients regardless of their ability to pay.

The budget proposed by Governor Malloy will devastate our hospital, patients, staff, and community. Bridgeport Hospital is a vital healthcare safety net in the Bridgeport region. Whenever people need high quality, safe medical care, we are open and ready to help – 24 hours a day. We are dedicated to our mission of caring for everyone who walks through our doors.

Our contribution to the community extends beyond our caregiving. Bridgeport Hospital plays a critical role in our economy. We employ over 2,500 people, and many others throughout our community are dependent on the business we generate. In total, we have an economic impact on our community of more than \$756,909,000. That is one of the reasons defunding hospitals hurts us all. The financial viability of Bridgeport Hospital is critical to the success of the Bridgeport community.

We cannot continue to absorb the deep cuts that the administration keeps leveling at hospitals. The Governor relied on hospitals in December in an effort to help close the gap in the state budget for sFY 2013. He cut funding to Bridgeport Hospital by \$3.4 million. We are reeling from this cut, and as a result, we have to make some very tough decisions.

Now, the Governor is again turning to hospitals to make up the deficit for sFY 2014 and 2015. This time, he is planning to cut over \$22 million from our hospital over the next two years. We will have no choice but to evaluate services and programs to see where adjustments can be made. Unfortunately, we'll have to look first at those programs and services that already lose money. More often than not, these are the ones that help the neediest in our communities. As a matter of fact, Bridgeport Hospital has several programs that will be at risk and we will make recommendations to our Board of Directors to make cuts. These programs include pulmonary rehabilitation, outpatient child and adolescence

psychiatric programs, and diabetes education. Also jobs will inevitably be affected since hospitals are about people providing care to people, and our single largest cost is staffing.

There seems to be a misconception that hospitals continue to be “winners” as a result of the SAGA-to-MLIA transition done by the state to capture federal matching dollars. While it is true that Medicaid pays better rates than the former SAGA program, it is important to note that Medicaid still does not fully reimburse hospitals for the costs to care for Medicaid patients, and furthermore, any realized benefit from the SAGA transition is significantly outweighed by losses due to increased enrollment in the Medicaid program.

As you know, we are in the midst of major changes in healthcare, and in addition to the proposed hit from the Governor’s budget, we are bracing for huge federal cuts. We already saw some reductions due to sequestration, and we are anticipating an even larger reduction if the issue is not resolved by congress before the March 1, 2013 deadline. Additionally, we must also brace ourselves for the Health Insurance Exchange that will take effect in 2014. We anticipate that, though well meaning, the Exchange will not fully address health insurance coverage for everyone. Among other things, subsidies that will be offered to individuals to help cover the cost of health insurance premiums are high and will be unaffordable for numerous individuals. Consequently, those individuals will likely seek medical treatment when necessary in hospital emergency departments, which ultimately becomes uncompensated care for us.

In a dynamic industry with a rapidly changing, unpredictable landscape, we need to continue our focus on quality and patient safety initiatives, and efforts to improve care efficiency. We need our staff to keep their focus on patients, and not be distracted by worry that they will lose their jobs.

We need stable hospitals. Our patients are relying on you. Our staff is relying on you. Our communities need you to protect hospital funding. As you develop your budget, please protect Connecticut’s hospitals.

Thank you for considering our position.