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PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
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TESTIMONY ON H.B.5728 AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF BREAST CANCER RATES IN THE STATE AND POTENTIAL CAUSES

My name is Karen N. Spargo and I am writing as the Director of Health for the Naugatuck Valley Health District, the local health department for the combined municipalities of Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Derby, Naugatuck, Seymour and Shelton. I would like to offer comments on the importance of H.B. 5728 An Act Concerning a Study of Breast Cancer Rates in the State and Potential Causes.

The goal of this proposed bill is to study the high rate of breast cancer in Connecticut, and particularly the lower Naugatuck Valley area, in order to identify potential causes for breast cancer incidents in the state and identify environmental risk factors that may be removed. According to the CT Department of Public Health, breast cancer is diagnosed in women more often than any other cancer.

Epidemiological studies, such as the one being proposed, contribute to the understanding of the root causes of health conditions and potentially make it possible to address successfully the risk factors that contribute to the morbidity and mortality that affect women in Connecticut. Also, it is important to understand the epidemiology of chronic and acute conditions, if we are serious about saving precious health care dollars as it is widely accepted that evidence-based prevention is less costly than medical care.

Additionally, the study has the potential to expand local and statewide data collection, providing for current and uniform data and analysis for disease specific causes. Without current and reliable data, it is a challenge at best to address those most at risk and the contributing factors to poor health outcomes.

The Lower Naugatuck Valley has a long history of addressing breast cancer. The Griffin Hospital and the Naugatuck Valley Health District have come together with our many partners since breast cancer was identified as a highly important health issue here in the early years of last decade. Since then, efforts have centered on awareness, early detection and treatment. However, those efforts would be greatly enhanced if we were armed with an epidemiological study that drills down to root causes and identifies those at highest risk, so that future efforts are focused and targeted with the purpose of reducing morbidity and mortality while saving health care dollars for the state.