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My name is Martha Small, MD. I have been a practicing pediatrician in Bridgeport, CT since 1987. During that time I have had the privilege of taking care of thousands of children and their families from all socio-economic backgrounds.

Disease prevention and vaccine administration have been the key stone of my practice. During those 25 years, my practice always had the option of getting vaccines from the State of Connecticut and giving those vaccines to our Medicaid and uninsured patients or purchasing vaccine from private suppliers to provide vaccine to our insured patients. This system always worked perfectly. We never had payment or supply issues. Our patient vaccine rates were excellent. The insurance companies paid us for a service that their clients were paying them for. The free market allowed us to negotiate prices and make a small profit from our vaccine purchases. That small profit helped to underwrite the cost of the many programs and services that we provide for our patients that are not reimbursed by them or their insurance companies. It also helped us to provide care to our 3,000 Medicaid patients.

As you know, the State of Connecticut is now forcing us to get all our vaccines directly from them. I can only assume that this means that the vaccine costs will now be borne by the taxpayers in the state and will be vulnerable to future budget cuts. I can also only assume that the true beneficiaries of this decision will be the insurance companies who will certainly see increased profits.

As medical providers we are now facing unforeseen challenges. Ordering, storing and administering vaccines has become much more complicated and costly. Our increased overhead is forcing us to consider staff cutbacks, layoffs and the elimination of valuable patient educational programs.

We are a small business that employs approximately 150 people. We provide healthcare to over 30,000 of Connecticut's children and want to continue to do so, but we need your help. Just like any other business, we need to have revenue to pay our overhead. We need to be reimbursed fairly for the services that we provide. We cannot survive if we have to provide those services at prices that are set below our cost.

Please help us to continue to be a successful Connecticut business by supporting House Bill 6158.

Martha Y Small, MD