



# Community Health Center Association of Connecticut

100 Great Meadow Road, Suite 400 • Wethersfield, CT 06109  
860.667.7820 • Fax 860.667.7835 • www.chcact.org

Testimony of

Community Health Center Association of Connecticut

Appropriations and Public Health Committees

DPH Report on Financial Assistance for Community Health Centers

December 12, 2013

Good morning and thank you to the Committees for the opportunity to present information about this report.

The Community Health Center Association of Connecticut (CHCACT) is a nonprofit organization that exists to advance the common interests of Connecticut's federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) in providing quality health care. Through training, technical assistance, public policy work and other initiatives, CHCACT supports the 14 FQHCs in their provision of comprehensive health care to over 342,000 residents across the state every year.

Today, on behalf of the 13 FQHCs that are members of CHCACT, I ask the Committees to **reject** the recommendations proffered by the Department of Public Health. Although I commend the Department for its work in researching models employed by other states, unfortunately, the recommendations leave some health centers with significant reductions in their grants. These reductions – some of which are upwards of \$100,000 and even \$200,000 annually – are simply unsustainable for health centers, which already are under substantial financial strain.

I also want to note that there is the potential for additional FQHC “look-alikes” to be recognized in the next several months, which may also impact any formula designed and approved for FY ‘15.

This DPH grant exists to subsidize health centers, particularly for their treatment of the uninsured and underinsured. As you may know, by law, FQHCs and FQHC look-alikes turn no patients away, regardless of ability to pay. They provide comprehensive medical, dental, behavioral health and support services to 340,000 patients every year, 23% of whom are uninsured and pay on a sliding fee scale.

A profile of FQHC patients in Connecticut (2012):

- 95% low income (under 200% of federal poverty level)
- 60% Medicaid
- 23% uninsured
- 14,800 homeless
- 73% racial/ethnic minorities
- 29% best served in a language other than English



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Although the FQHC movement is over forty years old, there is renewed attention to FQHCs as health reform is implemented. Based on the experience of Massachusetts, policy experts project an enormous growth in the FQHC population over the next few years as more Americans have access to health insurance – and therefore seek access to health care services. To support health reform goals, the financial stability of health centers is more important than ever.

CHCACT would be pleased to work with this Committee and the Department to craft recommendations for State Fiscal Year '15 that hold all health centers harmless.

Thank you.