

Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and members of the Public Health Committee

My name is JoAnn Eaccarino. I am President of the Board of Directors of the CT Association of School Based Health Centers. I would like to testify in support of HB 5730 AN ACT CONCERNING REIMBURSEMENT FOR SERVICES PROVIDED AT SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS.

I'd like to start by reviewing a short history of school based health center funding in Connecticut. The first centers were established in the mid-1980s, first with Robert Wood Johnson funding, and then with the support of the Connecticut legislature through requests for proposals. In those early days the centers depended exclusively on these state and/or federal grants for their operations. In 1996 the Department of Public Health, realizing that public funding was not sufficient for sustainability, mandated that each SBHC community contract with Medicaid Managed Care companies for reimbursement for services provided to state-insured children. In turn, the legislature mandated that those Medicaid Managed Care Companies wishing to do business in Connecticut contract with School Based Health Centers.

For years commercial insurance companies would not contract with school based health centers because they were not operational 24/7/365 and did not have on-site physician presence. However, with the advent of convenient care and walk-in clinics who did not meet that criteria, the CT Association of School Based Health Centers requested that a bill be raised mandating that the commercial insurers contract with the health centers. And so in the 2010 session SB 400 was passed into law as PA 10-118 AN ACT CONCERNING INSURANCE REIMBURSEMENT PAYMENTS TO SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS.

The final version of the Act stated that "Each health insurer licensed to do business in this state shall, at the request of any school-based health center or group of school-based health centers, offer to contract with such center or centers to provide reimbursement for covered health care services to persons who are insured by such licensed insurer. Such offer shall be made on terms and conditions similar to contracts offered to other providers of health care services".

With the help of a volunteer ProBono attorney, contracts were prepared and offered by the commercial insurers, and each SBHC community was encouraged to participate. To date, all have Medicaid contracts and all but a few sponsoring communities have executed contracts with the commercial companies.

Just a few points of clarification:

1. One-third of the students served by SBHCs are not eligible for private or public insurance;

2. Many of the preventive, health-promotion services provided are not reimbursable;
3. Just because a bill is submitted doesn't mean that it will get paid;
4. Revenue from reimbursements will enhance the funding received from the State, but it can never replace it, no matter how sophisticated and vigorous the billing practices. The state funding has been flat for years while costs of operation (ex. medical supplies and equipment, biomedical waste removal, office supplies and equipment) increase each year.

A mix of revenue sources is absolutely necessary for the sustainability of School Based Health Centers. The Association concurs that all available funding sources must be pursued.

Thank You