

3-15-2013

Testimony of Stacey Zimmerman on behalf of SEIU CT State Council

In Support of SB 967

Good Morning, Co-Chairs Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and the members of the Public Health Committee; Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. The Service Employees International Union Connecticut State Council represents over 65,000 active and retired members in Connecticut. SEIU is the state's largest union with both public and private sector members many of which work in the health care field.

Senate Bill 967 An Act Concerning Expenses Relating to the Sale of Non-Profit Hospitals and RB 6520 An Act Concerning Reporting by For-Profit Hospitals are good first steps to addressing what we believe will be a growing trend in the hospital and health care industry. Connecticut has been lucky over recent history with only one hospital going for-profit and one attempted merger, but it is clear that with more profit incentive business models evolving in health care that this national trend will hit our state facilities sooner rather than later.

We as a state must develop a comprehensive set of regulations and procedures that ensure that all the current stakeholders are protected and served to the best of our ability when such non-profit to for-profit conversions happen. It is encouraging to see that the Public Health Committee and the Governor's office have started to look at the issue of these conversions in a serious comprehensive manner. In saying this we believe that these bills along with the language included in the Governor's Implementer are good starts but need to be improved upon and possibly merged into one comprehensive bill dealing with all facets of the sale, merger or conversion of non-profit hospitals.

We along with community allies have developed a set of principles that any legislation regarding the hospital conversion issue should address.

- Independent evaluation assessing care and impact on patients, staff and community
- Independent community oversight board
- Fund foundation to improve local health possibly including increased public health education
- Maintain current levels, diversity and access to services offered and seek to increase the quality of care possibly including community health centers
- local hiring in hospital construction and healthcare operations
- Fair payment of property taxes

- Maintain jobs, benefits and free choice
- Comply with non-profit IRS reporting requirements
- Strategy developed for use of existing facilities
- Successor clause to protect agreement if there are future owners
- Accessibility via public transportation
- Accessibility to women's health and reproductive services

Connecticut does not have to reinvent the wheel when it comes to making hospital conversions a more structured and constituent friendly operation, our sister New England State Rhode Island has enacted a reasonably good statute to address the problem: **2012 -- S 2180 SUBSTITUTE A AS AMENDED LC00664/SUB A/4 STATE OF RHODE ISLAND IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2012** A N A C T RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY - HOSPITAL CONVERSIONS ACT.

SEIU and our community allies look forward to working with the Public Health Committee to help tighten and enhance the proposed language to ensure that public health and community needs are first in any discussion on the sale or conversion of our non-profit hospitals.