CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
Wednesday, March 20, 2013

SB 1128, An Act Concerning Influenza Immunizations for Health Care Employees

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony concerning **SB 1128, An Act Concerning Influenza Immunizations for Health Care Employees.**

SB 1128 requires hospitals, nursing homes, and emergency medical service organizations to ensure that employees "who may have direct contact with a patient or resident" are immunized against influenza in a manner that is consistent with the recommendations of the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). CHA strongly supports the intent of this legislation, but suggests the addition of language to indicate that the vaccination of employees "who may have direct contact with a patient or resident" is the minimum requirement.

In November of 2011, the CHA Board of Trustees adopted a statewide policy endorsing mandatory influenza vaccinations for hospital personnel as part CHA hospitals' commitment to patient safety. The CHA Board took this action in concert with reports and positions of key national organizations that indicated more aggressive efforts to immunize hospital staff were necessary to keep patients safe and save lives.

The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America considers the influenza vaccination of healthcare personnel (HCP) to be "a core patient and HCP safety practice," and supports mandatory vaccination. Other organizations citing the need for mandatory vaccination programs for HCP include the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC), the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA), and the National Patient Safety Foundation (NPSF). The Joint Commission (TJC) standards require hospitals to offer vaccinations to licensed independent practitioners and staff, make vaccinations accessible, and provide education regarding influenza. In addition, TJC expects accredited hospitals (all CHA member hospitals are TJC-accredited) to evaluate and continuously improve vaccination rates toward the *Healthy People 2020* target goal of 90 percent.

In its recommendations, the CDC indicates that annual vaccination is the most important measure to take to prevent seasonal influenza infection, and that achieving high rates of immunization of HCP is critical. According to the CDC, research demonstrates that high vaccination levels of HCP are associated with reductions in the transmission of influenza, staff illness and absenteeism, and the risk of hospital-acquired influenza cases. Moreover, ***high rates of HCP vaccination are associated with reductions in flu-related illness and death.***

In December of 2012, the CDC evaluated levels of HCP vaccination and cited positive progress with regard to physicians, nurses, and other clinical personnel. However, it found significant improvement required among administrative and non-clinical support staff, and others.

While it is clear that vaccinating staff who may have direct contact with patients is an important step, many Connecticut hospitals have elected to vaccinate all personnel. This is because members of the hospital staff work together as a team, whether involved in patient contact or not, and such a strategy helps reduce the transmission of influenza and protect staff members and their families.

We applaud this legislation, as it supports action to protect patients and improve the health of communities, and we thank you for consideration of our position.

For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.