

Legal Assistance Resource Center

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Testimony before the Public Health Committee in support of S.B. 1129, An Act Concerning Health Plan Data

by Jane McNichol, Executive Director
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I am Jane McNichol, Executive Director of the Legal Assistance Resource Center of Connecticut, the advocacy and support center for legal services programs in the state. We represent the interests of very-low income residents of the state. I am also a member of the Basic Health Plan Work Group, which was convened by the Office of Health Reform and Innovation to evaluate the state Basic Health Program (SBHP) option under the Affordable Care Act.

I am here to express strong support for SB 1129, An Act Concerning Health Plan Data. This bill codifies the recommendations of the Basic Health Plan Work Group. The data to be collected will enable the Work Group and state policymakers to evaluate the need for and feasibility of a State Basic Health Program once the federal government has issued guidance on this option.

The SBHP option was designed to provide a mechanism for high-cost states such as Connecticut to provide affordable health care to adults with incomes between 133% and 200% of the federal poverty level. This provision was included in federal law because of concern that the cost of participation in plans in the Exchange, even with subsidies, would be prohibitive to low-income residents of high-cost states.

After considerable discussion of this option last session, the Office of Health Reform and Innovation set up a Basic Health Plan Work Group to make recommendations on whether a State Basic Health Program should be adopted in Connecticut. The Work Group worked over the summer with significant help from the Office of Policy and Management and research by the Milliman consulting firm.

By November, it was clear that the needed guidance from the federal government would not be available in time to implement a SBHP in January of 2014. The Group adopted recommendations to defer a final decision about a SBHP until federal guidance was available.

The Group also recommended that the Exchange collect information about the experience of individuals with incomes between 133% and 200% of the federal poverty level in the Exchange to inform a decision about the adoption of a Basic Health Program in 2015. **This bill will ensure that that data is collected and is available for consideration when federal guidance on implementing a State Basic Health Program is issued.**