



# Community Health Center Association of Connecticut

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Testimony of

Community Health Center Association of Connecticut

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Appropriations Committee

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Thank you for this opportunity to **provide support** for Governor Malloy's budget proposal regarding the budget for the Department of Social Services.

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 340,000 residents across the state every year.

A profile of FQHC patients in Connecticut (2012):

- 95% low income (under 200% of federal poverty level)
- 60% Medicaid/HUSKY
- 23% uninsured
- 14,787 homeless
- 73% racial/ethnic minorities

FQHCs are grounded in their communities. They are governed by local Boards of Directors. Federal Law requires that at least 51% of each Board must be patients at the centers. FQHC staff – **over 2,700 people across the state** – live in the neighborhoods where the FQHCs are located. The FQHC know the cultures of and speak the languages of the patients they serve. A recent survey of staff at CT FQHCs revealed that the most common second language spoken by staff and patients was Spanish. But there was no consensus about the next most common language. FQHCs across the state responded that their next most common language was Creole, Bosnian, Albanian, Bangla...the list of languages went on and on!

Moreover, FQHCs provide more than just health care services. In addition to enabling services, FQHCs also have Medicaid Outreach workers, Certified Application Counselors for Access Health CT and SNAP Outreach workers on site. Patients are connected to services that they need to improve their quality of life.

On behalf of the state's health centers, I'd like to thank this Committee for the support you've shown in the past for the work the FQHCs do. Moreover, CHCACT supports the Governor's budget proposals related to human services.

This year's proposal honors the commitments already made to both health care providers and consumers. In this budget adjustment year, "no news is good news." Fortunately for our state's residents, no reductions are proposed to eligibility or benefits in the HUSKY program – a program that serves more than 1 in every 6 residents. Health care providers, including federally qualified health centers, are similarly held harmless in this agency budget. And the State will continue to move towards a more efficiently run Department of Social Services, which will benefit all Connecticut taxpayers.

Moreover, CHCACT applauds the governor's proposal to add 103 staff (66 new positions) to assist with eligibility determinations. This committee knows well the delays in processing for both HUSKY and SNAP, which have impacted access to health care for consumers, financial stability for health care providers and have led to federal class action lawsuits. Although these new staff may not be sufficient to completely resolve these ongoing delays, they are certainly a step in the right direction, which CHCACT supports.

During this era of implementation of health reform, the FQHCs continue to be a critical part of the state's public health care system, providing care to some of the neediest residents of our state. In fact, FQHCS like hospitals are some of the only health care providers that turn no one away, including immigrants – both legal immigrants who have been here fewer than five years (and are therefore ineligible for Medicaid), and undocumented immigrants. Based on the experiences of Massachusetts, the role of health centers will likely increase with the increase in health insurance enrollment.

I ask this Committee to continue your historical support of health centers. Thank you.