



**TESTIMONY OF  
SUSAN DAVIS, RN, EdD  
CHAIRMAN OF THE CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
BEFORE THE  
FINANCE, REVENUE AND BONDING COMMITTEE  
Thursday, March 13, 2014**

**SB 368, An Act Phasing Out The Hospitals Tax**

I want to thank the members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Connecticut Hospitals and the patients we serve. My name is Susan Davis. I am the Chairman of the Connecticut Hospital Association Board of Trustees, the former President and Chief Executive Officer of St. Vincent's Health Services, and currently a member of the Board of Trustees of St. Vincent's Health Services. Connecticut hospitals **strongly support** SB 368, An Act Phasing out The Hospital Tax.

As a former caregiver and executive serving the healthcare needs of the Greater Bridgeport area, I know first-hand the critical role hospitals play in the health and quality of life of our communities. Connecticut hospitals treat everyone who comes through their doors 24 hours a day, regardless of ability to pay. In 2012, we provided nearly \$225 million in free services for those who could not afford to pay.

Connecticut hospitals are national leaders in patient safety. It is our number one priority. Our state was the first to institute a pioneering program to become high reliability organizations (HRO), organizations in high-risk fields that perform safely, with no accidents, 100 percent of the time.

Our focus on becoming HROs is resulting in the creation of cultures of safety with the goal to eliminate all preventable harm. Every day, hospital teams across the state are beginning their days with safety huddles, ensuring that safety is reinforced as the most important focus—the foundation on which all hospital work is done. This first-in-the nation program is not only changing the way we think about safety, it is saving lives.

We are extremely proud of this program. It takes everyone in the hospital – the administrators, clinicians, and every member of the staff – to provide safe care to every patient, every time. It involves transforming the culture in our hospitals to one that is preoccupied with safety first, and this includes improved communication and technology.

The hospital tax makes it harder to invest in the staff and technology that we need to ensure patients receive the highest quality care.

St. Vincent's, like hospitals across the state, has been hard hit by the tax. We eliminated 100 positions in 2013, laying off 50 people. We reduced paid time off for all full time employees. No merit increases were budgeted for fiscal year 2014 and employees are now carrying more of the financial burden for benefits. We also eliminated a diabetes education program and closed a school that was serving high school students in need of alternative education. The increase in the hospital tax – coming in four short months – will stress this organization further and result in additional similar actions.

St. Vincent's and hospitals across the state need relief from this burdensome tax. Hospitals need to invest in services and programs that serve our patients, and in staff and caregivers. Connecticut hospitals also need to stay national leaders in patient safety, and to do that we need stable and adequate funding.

As a member of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee you have an opportunity to help us provide Connecticut patients with the highest quality care. Support SB 368, and help us phase out a tax that is hurting, not helping our patients. Together, we can continue to lead the effort to ensure everyone who comes to our hospitals receives the very best, safe care.

Thank you for your consideration of our position.