UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE
FOUNDATION OF CONNECTICUT

Testimony in support of House Bill 5257:
An Act Concerning Hospital Employees and Hospital Conversions
Submitted by Frances G. Padilla, President
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Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut (UHCF) is an independent, non-profit foundation dedicated to achieving a high quality, affordable health care system that is accessible to everyone in the state. We are very concerned about the loss of local control over an important community asset and valuable employer that could happen when a hospital transfers from non-profit to for-profit status. We therefore strongly support the purpose of H.B. 5257 to protect both current employees and the overall community, should hospital conversions ultimately occur in Connecticut.

We support the provision in the bill that calls for no less than three public hearings so that the potential impact on employees and on the community of a for-profit takeover of the local hospital can be thoroughly discussed in a public setting. We believe that a comprehensive community impact assessment should be completed by an independent third party, with the findings of that study aired at the public hearings, to inform that discussion.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) requires every non-profit hospital to conduct a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) once every three years. The proposed rule, 78 Fed. Reg. 20523 (proposed April 5, 2013) (to be codified at 26 C.F.R pts. 1, 53), requires a hospital to:

- Define the community it serves
- Assess the health needs of that community, prioritize those needs and identify potential measures and resources to address the needs
- Take into account input from people who represent the broad interests of that community, such as health care consumers – including those who are from medically underserved, low-income and minority populations – advocates, nonprofit and community-based organizations, local government officials, local school districts, health care providers and community health centers, private businesses and labor and workforce representatives.

CHNAs have been completed or are well underway in hospital communities across Connecticut. They are an important effort that is linking together diverse and crucial local constituencies to focus efforts on community health improvement.

For-profit hospitals are not required to conduct CHNAs. The bill should be revised to specifically require that CHNAs continue to be conducted by those hospitals that undergo conversion, to ensure that communities retain this vital, inclusive planning process. This would be a concrete way to live up to the bill's stated intent to, "preserve community benefits in the affected community."

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