



TO: MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

FROM: JEAN REXFORD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CONNECTICUT CENTER FOR PATIENT SAFETY

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PLEASE SUPPORT HOUSE BILL 5535 – AAC NOTICE OF A PATIENT’S OBSERVATION STATUS AND NOTICE CONCERNING THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THOSE WHO PROVIDE HEALTH CARE AND COUNSELING SERVICES

Friends:

Good morning, I am Jean Rexford, Executive Director of the CT Center for Patient Safety. I am here today in support of HB 5535 but it is only a first step in providing much needed price transparency for all residents of our state.

Residents make decisions all the time based on cost. We know what a vet charges, a dentist, and we have care options based on those costs. Yet most of the time we have no idea of the cost of procedures and medications that have been ordered until we get the bill and for many people that cost is unaffordable and it is too late.

I had hoped for passage of a bill this year that, like Maine’s bill last year, would require doctors to provide cost transparency on regularly-performed procedures that he/she performed. This is only fair to the patient who suddenly may be looking at added-on costs by the anesthesiologist and or an affiliation fee because the physician practice is now tied to a hospital system.

We are seeing rapid change in care delivery. Patients’ needs must be the driver of care – not the needs of our convoluted and often inefficient system.

I have the privilege of being appointed to national groups that are grappling with reform. Just last week I was a guest of the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, convening on the meaning of patient engagement – cost transparency is a fundamental driver in changing systems.

FairHealth in New York, www.fairhealthconsumer.org is a fine example of patient access to costs of care by procedure and facility.

I realize that this would be an added initial burden on the practitioner’s practice. We keep saying we want shared decision-making, engaged patients, increased patient participation in their care,- fundamental to that is knowledge and cost, as well as quality, is critical.

Section 1 of House Bill 5355 requires hospitals to provide oral and written notice to a hospital patient that the patient is under "observation status" -- and has not been "admitted." This is extremely important information for patients -- because their status could ultimately affect the patients' insurance coverage, Medicaid/Medicare coverage, other hospital services and/or future homecare or nursing home services.

On November 11, 2013, a *Hartford Courant* Editorial stated: "Meanwhile, Connecticut's General Assembly should require hospitals to tell patients and families within 24 hours of admission what their status is and explain the potential financial differences."

It is great that the Public Health Committee is taking action to help hospital patients obtain crucial information regarding their status and treatment.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 5355.

Jean Rexford
Executive Director