



Testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 257 An Act Concerning Hepatitis C Testing
Public Health Committee
March 13, 2014

Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and members of the Public Health Committee, on behalf of physicians and physicians in training of the Connecticut State Medical Society (CSMS) and American College of Physicians Connecticut Chapter (ACP) thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony to you today in opposition to Senate Bill 257 An Act Concerning Hepatitis C Testing.

Senate Bill 257 would require that physicians offer Hepatitis C (HCV) testing to any patient born between the years of 1945 and 1965. Further, it requires a physician with a patient whose test is reactive (positive for Hepatitis C) to offer care for Hepatitis C or refer to another physician for the continued care. Not only is this bill unnecessary, it codifies a medical protocol and interferes with the physician patient relationship. We feel resources would be better spent educating physicians and the public of the need for hepatitis screening for citizens born between those years as well as others at high risk, rather than mandated practice protocols.

Multiple separate and distinct national organizations currently support and have recommendations for the screenings contained in the bill: The United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF), an independent panel of clinical experts created by Congress in 1984, and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Specific recommendations from the CDC are the following: (1) Adults born during 1945 and 1965 should receive 1-time testing for HVC without prior ascertainment of HVC risk and (2) All persons with identified HCV infection should receive a brief alcohol screening and intervention as clinically indicated, followed by referral to appropriate care and treatment services for HVC infection and related conditions. Just this week, the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases and the Infectious Disease Society of American released their joint guideline on testing, managing and treating hepatitis C. Its testing provision mirrors the USPSTF guideline in calling for screening of the same age group as well as individuals otherwise at high risk.

A significant amount of time, effort and resources have been directed to the process to assess the need for and develop the recommendations provided. Recommendations from the CDC and USPSTF carry significant weight with physicians when developing practice protocols. Most physicians integrate these protocols into practice and adhere to them when providing care for their patients. For these reasons we believe there is no need for Senate Bill 257 and urge the committee to support education of physicians and the public regarding the need for screening rather than mandating aspects of the practice of medicine.

Please oppose Senate Bill 257