

Public Health Committee Public Hearing

March 19, 2014

Testimony on Raised Bill 438, An Act Concerning Certification of Stroke Centers

Good afternoon Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Kristen Hickey, from Wolcott, Connecticut, and I am here today to ask for your support for **Senate Bill 438, An Act Concerning Certification of Stroke Centers**.

Stroke, a blockage or rupture of a blood vessel in the brain, is the 4th leading cause of death in Connecticut, killing more than 1400 residents a year, while also being the leading cause of disability. The most recent economic data from the DPH states the stroke hospitalization charges for Connecticut residents amounted to \$192 million in 2005. Treatment of Stroke is extremely time sensitive because approximately 32,000 brain cells die per second. With Stroke treatment being so urgent and potentially lifesaving, one would think that every hospital in Connecticut is prepared to care for Stroke patients and that is not the case. As a Stroke Coordinator of The Hospital of Central Connecticut, both the Bradley and New Britain campuses, as well as Midstate Medical Center, I see on a daily basis, the positive impact organized stroke care can have on a patient's treatment and recovery and I am disheartened that this treatment is not available for all residents of Connecticut. Currently, Connecticut's level of stroke care is not meeting National recommendations and standards, unlike our neighboring states of New York and Rhode Island. There are no standardized protocols for rapid transport to appropriate health care facilities for patients experiencing an acute stroke. Also, not every hospital in Connecticut is capable of caring for acute Stroke patients, but they continue to treat these patients, and they do not provide the standard of care as recommended by the FDA. TPA is the evidence-based treatment for acute stroke but

it is not available or used correctly in many hospitals across the state and this is something that must improve.

As a Stroke Coordinator for the last 7 years, I have seen the care of stroke patients at the Hospital of Central Connecticut greatly improve as a direct result of our Primary Stroke Center Certification. This rigorous certification process focuses on the multidisciplinary team approach to stroke care as well as the Stroke Center's performance improvement initiatives. Our patients truly benefit from the expertise and collaboration that occurs because of the Primary Stroke Center Certification.

In 2007, the Department of Public Health attempted to address this issue by developing a voluntary designation program for Primary Stroke Centers. But, in 2013, the DPH decided to move in a different direction, focusing its resources on prevention, and that left the state of Connecticut with a large void in stroke care. **Raised Bill 438, An Act Concerning Certification of Stroke Centers**, can greatly improve the inadequacies of stroke care in Connecticut. Every person deserves to have the best possible stroke care and this bill can help Connecticut achieve that goal. Under no circumstance should any Connecticut resident have to sacrifice quality of life because of where they live. I am passionate about improving Stroke Care in Connecticut and the core belief behind **Raised Bill 438, An Act Concerning Certification of Stroke Centers** is that quality of care for Stroke patients needs to become a priority for all hospitals in Connecticut. Doing what is best for our most vulnerable population should always be our top priority.

