Joint Committee on Public Health
Submitted by: Catherine Bailey, Legal and Public Policy Director, Connecticut Women's Education & Legal Fund
Public Hearing: March 19, 2014

Raised House Bill No. 5571, *An Act Concerning Certificate of Need Requirements, Hospital Conversions and Medical Foundations*
Raised Senate Bill No. 460, *An Act Concerning Hospital Conversions and Other Matters Affecting Hospitals*

My name is Catherine Bailey and I serve as the Legal and Public Policy Director at the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF). CWEALF is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to empowering women, girls, and their families to achieve equal opportunities in their personal and professional lives. For 40 years, CWEALF has provided information, referral and support to women seeking guidance about questions involving family law, employment discrimination, education, and civil rights.

We offer our support in favor of House Bill No. 5571, An Act Concerning Certificate of Need Requirements, Hospital Conversions and Medical Foundations; and Senate Bill No. 460, An Act Concerning Hospital Conversions and Other Matters Affecting Hospitals. In particular, we support the provisions of these bills that would require hospitals and other facilities to apply for a certificate of need before terminating the inpatient or outpatient reproductive services that they offer.

As a member of the Coalition for Choice, CWEALF is a longstanding supporter of access to reproductive care and services for women. It is anticipated that large health care companies will continue to affiliate with or purchase Connecticut hospitals. In doing so, there is a significant risk that reproductive health care could be eliminated at hospitals purchased by large companies that purchase several health care facilities and choose to use religious directives for all newly-acquired facilities. This could be the case even for medical institutions that previously offered such services. Women in certain communities will be left with very limited care, and in some cases, no reproductive health care.

Mergers and conversions, if not treated appropriately, may result in unanticipated adverse consequences to health care. We urge your support of these provisions of House Bill No. 5571 and Senate Bill No. 460 to ensure women have access to a full range of health care options.