

DOUGLAS A. GERARD, MD

March 6, 2014

General Law Committee
Room 3500, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Sirs:

I am a physician practicing as a general internist in New Hartford. The following comments are pertinent to HB 5337, An Act Concerning Fees Charged for Services Provided at Hospital-Based Facilities.

In the past two years I have had multiple patients complain about fees charged by the Charlotte-Hungerford hospital in relation to their hospital employed physicians. In the Torrington area, all the surgeons, urologists, cardiologists, and an orthopedist are now hospital employees.

Last April, I personally saw one of the surgeons for a simple skin biopsy performed in his usual office. Aetna allowed \$132 for the physician's bill and \$213 for the hospital facility fee, though Aetna "pays" \$1088 toward that facility fee. Since I had not met my deductible yet for the year, those charges were ultimately paid by me. A subsequent visit 6 weeks later resulted in similar charges. Those of us that have high deductible health care plans such as HSA plans and the newer health care exchange plans offered by this state are particularly vulnerable to these hospital facility fees.

As a physician, I am also placed in a difficult position with regards to hospital facility fees. I am now part of an Accountable Care Organization associated with St. Francis Hospital in Hartford. This organization formed as a result of healthcare reform measures adopted in the past several years. The hospital and its doctors, including doctors in the outlying community, will be entering into downside financial risk bearing contracts with not only Medicare, but several commercial insurance companies. The entire organization's "bottom line" will be influenced by the cost of rendering care to its thousands of patients. Because of this, I am now avoiding referring my patients to any hospital employed physicians in the Torrington area, opting instead to find better value care in surrounding towns.

The measures proposed in HB 5337 are a move in the right direction. I would also like to see the need for notification of patients of these fees at the time they first make an appointment. Walking into a physician's office after waiting several weeks for an appointment and finding out that there are extra charges, sometimes exorbitant, imposed on that visit is not "transparent" enough. The patient will not likely choose to cancel that

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visit and wait to find care elsewhere.

On behalf of the patients and physicians in this state, I want to thank you for your attention to this problem.

Sincerely,

Douglas A. Gerard MD