



TESTIMONY OF HECTOR GONZALEZ SUBMITTED TO THE APPROPRIATIONS AND HIGHER
EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON FEBRUARY 24, 2015

*H.B. No. 6824 An Act Concerning the State Budget For the Biennium Ending
June Thirtieth 2017, and Making Appropriations Thereafter and Other Provisions
Related to Revenue*

Hector Gonzalez, appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony concerning **H.B. No. 6824- An Act Concerning the State Budget For the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth 2017, and Making Appropriations Thereafter and Other Provisions Related to Revenue.** It is imperative that the funding for the CT AHEC Network be restored (\$456K). I, an Eastern AHEC, Inc. employee submit this testimony to support and keep the \$456,000 for Higher Education and Employment Advancement Budget. For the past 18 years, the Connecticut AHEC Network, provides Connecticut residents with critical resources and programs that are critical and in demand for developing and enforcing a stronger healthcare workforce which is cost effective, culturally competent, inter-professional and responsive to the health care needs of the state.

The CT AHEC Network is state wide and consists four-regional centers located in Willimantic, Hartford, Waterbury, and Bridgeport. The program office is based at the University of Connecticut Health Center. As a statewide program, it functions locally to provide high quality and cost effective services that meet the needs of the community. Those of us in this field see the importance and impact that these programs have for the community.

AHEC's mission and goals directly support health care workforce development in the state. Focus areas for the AHEC include:

- **Provide and train medical interpreters to facilitate the importance of conveying medical information to patient and providers.**
- **Provide and train high school and college students CPR/First Aid in English and Spanish languages.**
- **Provide and assist UConn students with a free health care clinic to the under privileged community.**
- **Recruiting underrepresented minority and disadvantaged students into the health professions.**
- **Partnering with community organizations** to address local health issues.
- **Providing continuing education** that improves the care received by vulnerable populations.
- **Providing outreach to vulnerable populations (migrant farm workers, medically and dentally underserved, homeless, etc.)**
- **Developing and supporting community based inter-professional training** opportunities for health professions and pre-health professions students.

The CT AHEC Network engages more than 7,000 learners annually from 30+ secondary schools, 9 colleges/universities and 10 health professional schools state-wide. Through its on-line health careers manual (HOT Guide – Health Occupations and Technology Careers (www.healthcareersinct.com)), the CT AHEC Network provides current and accurate information on CT based health professions programs, admissions prerequisites, training, credentialing and roles of over 85 health careers to students, parents, teachers, guidance counselors, librarians more than 1 million times each year. AHEC provides continuing education for the state’s health care professionals through a variety of mediums and topics including: chronic disease management, immunization and public health, Veterans’ mental health, cultural competence, utilization of medical interpreters and Community Health Workers, etc.

As person who is involved with the community representing the Medical Interpreter Program and Coordinator of the Covenant Soup Kitchen Health Clinic for Eastern AHEC, Inc., I personally feel that if this state support of \$456,000 is eliminated from the CT AHEC Network, that Connecticut as state will be spending money elsewhere to accommodate the void. These programs are impactful and will be detrimental if the funding and CT AHEC Network is eliminated from Connecticut. Please, see the pros and cons of this change and you will see that the pros will have a better positive impact in our community. Therefore, I believe that it would the best interest for the state of Connecticut to leave this funding in the budget.

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