



Testimony of Lorraine Gruber 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 o Revenue

Eastern Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Inc., 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). AHEC provides. I, Lorraine Gruber an Eastern AHEC, Inc. employee submit this testimony to support and advocate for CT Area Health Education Network which will give the opportunity for funding to be reinstated for the 2015-2017 Connecticut State budget. It is not only imperative but instrumental that this funding be restored to the CT AHEC Networks in the amount of \$456,000 for Higher Education and Employment Advancement.

The AHEC network in Connecticut is impactful and provides the community with access to health care resources and programs for higher learning which are both influential in developing a healthcare workforce. This enhances access to culturally and linguistically appropriate healthcare education and increases the diversity, quality, and distribution of future healthcare professionals.

For 18 years the Connecticut AHEC Network, composed of four regional centers and a program office, has implemented, expanded and has successfully proven that they have linked local community groups with resources of the University of Connecticut, its Health Center and other academic institutions across the state.

The overall mission and goals of all AHEC's is to support, strengthen and develop health care workforce in the state. Areas include the following but not limited to;

- Recruiting underrepresented minority and disadvantaged students into the health professions.
- Partnering with community organizations to address local health issues; such as diabetes, bullying, pregnancy education and mental health.
- Providing continuing education, such as the Medical Interpreter Program which covers over 20 languages and Eastern AHEC is the only AHEC that offer this program.
- First Aid/CPR offered in English and Spanish languages offered by Eastern AHEC.
- Providing outreach to underserved 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.
- Providing life experiences tailored to life situations that are currently presented.

The CT AHEC Network engages over 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...

The CT AHEC Network receives state, federal, foundation and private support. Without this funding from these various funders essential programs such as; Medical Interpreter Program, Youth Health Collegiate Services (YHSC), Collegiate Health Service Corp (CHSC), Covenant Soup Kitchen Health Clinic, Retention and Recruitment Initiative (RRA) and Veterans Mental Health Initiative will no longer be offered to Connecticut state residents as it has been for the last 18 years. These programs have been heavily relied on all these years, I personally feel that if CT AHEC Network is not restored its funding that it would be very detrimental to the community, would leave a unreplaceable void, but also be very difficult to be reinstated in the future if eliminated for the 2015-2017 state budget.

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