CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2015

HB 5793, An Act Establishing Safe Haven Day

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **HB 5793, An Act Establishing Safe Haven Day.** CHA supports the bill.

Before commenting on the bill, it's important to point out that Connecticut hospitals treat everyone who comes through their doors 24 hours a day, regardless of ability to pay.

This is a time of unprecedented change in healthcare, and Connecticut hospitals are leading the charge to transform the way care is provided. They are focused on providing safe, accessible, equitable, affordable, patient-centered care for all, and they are finding innovative solutions to integrate and coordinate care to better serve their patients and communities.

Connecticut's **Safe Havens for Newborns Act** enables a distressed parent to leave an infant at a hospital Emergency Department anonymously, without fear of prosecution for abandonment, for up to 30 days after the child's birth. When the law is invoked for a baby, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) begins immediately a process to terminate parental rights, and places the baby in a home with a family that intends to adopt the child.

Since its enactment in 2000, nearly two dozen newborns have been brought to Connecticut hospitals. However, despite the law, newborns are still abandoned on occasion. Some of these babies survive the ordeal. Sadly, others do not.

In 2014, the General Assembly, under the leadership of Representative Pamela Sawyer, convened the Safe Haven Working Group, a public-private initiative, to seek ways to spread the word and sustain the message among Connecticut's citizens, and especially young people, about the state's **Safe Haven for Newborns Act**. CHA is proud to serve as a member of this group, which also includes legislators, interested citizens, and representatives of hospitals, universities, media outlets, state agencies, and child and healthcare advocacy groups.

The working group is engaged in a campaign to find new ways to inform people that they have an option if they cannot care for their newborn child adequately. We are developing a public awareness campaign, directed to new mothers, their partners, and peers, to increase education about the law. This campaign includes updating existing materials, developing new materials, and using new techniques to inform people about the law.

HB 5793 would establish April 2 of each year as Safe Haven Day in Connecticut. CHA believes that designating such a day is a key element of a comprehensive statewide strategy to afford policymakers, advocates, educators, healthcare providers, and social service agencies with an annual opportunity to focus public attention on this lifesaving law that protects both children and mothers in distress.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.