



*Written Testimony for the Public Health Committee
March 11, 2015*

The Department of Social Services offers the following written testimony on a bill that may impact the agency.

Proposed S.B. No. 812 AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS AND HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE

This proposal establishes a statewide implementation of electronic health records among all health care providers and establishes a statewide health information exchange.

As of December 2014, the State of Connecticut had received nearly \$300 million through the electronic health records (EHR) incentive program administered through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Almost 5,636 eligible professionals and all hospitals have received payments for adoption of EHRs and many have attested to achieving Meaningful Use Stage 1.

A physician survey was completed in 2011 and 2013 totaling 1,346 responses. Between 68-74% of the physicians are either using EHRs or are in the process of implementing EHRs – an increase from 53-56% of physicians in 2011. The rate of EHR adoption is projected to exceed 75% by the year 2015 based on the trends. E-prescribing activities increased from 2011 to 2013 among pharmacies and prescribers. Ninety-six percent (96%) of the pharmacies were enabled for processing e-prescriptions and 62% of the prescribers were e-prescribing. In 2013, 63% of the Connecticut’s hospitals were sharing lab results electronically, higher than the national average of 56%. This represents a significant decrease from 77% in 2011-12. Fifty percent (50%) of the independent labs were sending lab results electronically in 2013, an increase from 37% in 2011-12; due to the low number of labs that responded to our survey, however, these results should be interpreted with caution. Currently, Connecticut does not have an operational statewide Health Information Exchange (HIE).

Based on a Connecticut resident survey completed in 2013, 54% of the participants described their health as excellent or very good, 89% of participants were satisfied with the care they received from their doctor or physician’s assistant and 87% of participants said they understood what their doctor said to them during their last visit. When asked about their views on the use of health information technology (HIT) in improving care, 83% of participants had heard about electronic medical records, 72% supported a national HIE that was driven by patient consent, and 64% expressed support for an “opt-in” and 21% supported an “opt-out” consent model.

Based on the data currently available on EHR adoption rates among physicians, most physician practices that want to adopt certified EHRs have done so. Since July 1, 2014, DSS has been

designated as the agency responsible for HIT/HIE activities in the state. DSS is concluding the HIT Strategic Planning process in the upcoming weeks. This process will clearly identify the mission, vision, and the objectives for a statewide HIT/HIE.

This proposed bill does not take into account the work that has been done to create a statewide HIE. Also, it is important to note that eHealth CT does not have any staff (all funds are contracted to SMC Partners) and is a virtual organization with a governing board. It is unclear how designating eHealth helps solve the problem being identified. Lastly, the challenge of lack of resources continues to be a problem for implementing technology in CT.

For these reasons, the Department is unable to support this bill.