

To: Chairpersons Senator Terry B. Gerratana and Rep. Matthew Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee

My name is Steve Jennings. I live in Hamden. For the past eight years I have been studying health care reform and have been active in the greater New Haven area to spread the message for reform. I have worked with several organizations lobbying on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of CT citizens who are caught in the confusing, for-profit mess we call the health care system.

Thank you for this chance to testify for the following bills: SB 809, SB 810, SB813, SB 815, SB 954, and HB 6938.

Transparency in pricing and billing by providers is a major issue I hope you will deal with. Most of us have insurance and we have no idea what procedures and medical devices cost. We also know that prices vary widely and seem to be related more to "what the traffic will bear" than their real value. Many providers also don't know the cost of devices or procedures they use and recommend. If any of you have seen an actual hospital bill, you quickly realize that it is indecipherable with surprising charges you had no idea were going to be included. SB 810 and SB 813 deal with this issue.

The quality of outcomes is also a major issue in health care. SB 815 is an opportunity to monitor this based on the data that would be gathered by a CT Health Policy Commission. As we know, health care outcomes vary widely depending on many variables, such as customary practice by a physician or group of physicians, the skill of the provider, the geographic area, and whether or not the care is provided at an ER being used as a person's primary care provider.

Facility fees, which SB 809 deals with, are of concern to more and more people as outlying facilities are built or purchased by hospitals to serve people in suburban and small town areas. These fees are one more surprise in the package of costs hospitals are adding to their ever inventive way of charge escalation.

In summary, there is much to be done in the areas of affordability, accessibility, quality of care, and ending racial and ethnic disparities. Thank you for your attention and efforts on these important issues of social justice.