

**TESTIMONY OF PATRICK LAPENTA 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***

Patrick Lapenta, 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 currently attend Parish Hill High School where I am a Youth Health Service Corps (YHSC) participant with Eastern AHEC, Inc. The YHSC program provides me with resources and hands on experiences to explore different health careers. Through the YHSC, I have learned and practiced valuable skills such as leadership, volunteer service and cultural sensitivity. Without the YHSC, I wouldn't have been able to meet inspiring health professionals, obtain CPR certification or implement meaningful service learning projects in my community. The YSCH has inspired me to go into the medical field and I would like for other students to have the same opportunity.

AHEC is based at the University of Connecticut Health Center and is implemented through four regional centers located in the Willimantic, Hartford, Waterbury, and Bridgeport areas. The four centers enable the AHEC Program to carry out local programs with great efficiency. As a statewide program, it functions locally to provide high quality, efficient, effective and flexible services that meet local needs.

Fiscal support for AHEC is as diverse as its programs with state, federal, foundation and private support. Withdrawal of state support will jeopardize these other resources. In an era of healthcare transformation, maintaining the \$456,000 AHEC line item in the 2015-2017 Connecticut State Budget is critical to assure that the CT AHEC Network will be there to deliver its unique services and programs to our residents as it creates the diverse, well trained and cost effective interprofessional healthcare workforce that Connecticut requires and deserves.