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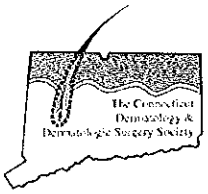
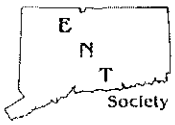
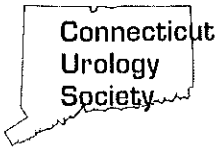






FTR

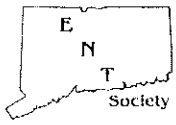
Written Testimony in support of

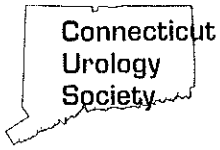
HB 6736 AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SETTING OF PAYMENTS BY HEALTH INSURERS AND OTHER ENTITIES FOR NONCOVERED BENEFITS.

On behalf of the physicians and physicians in training for the over 1000 physicians in the medical specialties of Dermatology, Ophthalmology, Otolaryngology and Urology we would like to thank this committee for bringing this important issue of insurers setting fees on non-covered services up for public hearing and offer supporting testimony on this issue.

Our organizations have had a long history of testifying before this committee against insurers that quite frankly are too powerful for individual physicians or even trade societies who represent over 90% of the providers in a specialty to deal with. Over the past ten years we have testified that these insurers offer provider contracts that are "non –negotiable" and with a take it or leave it attitude. Many Physicians are discouraged after spending 10,000- 16,000 of clinical hours in training so that we can be the best at what we do only to find that they must deal with an industry who cares not about quality of service but about how they can spend the least amount of dollars on the most consumers. Physicians struggle with this environment because it is extremely difficult to walk away from any healthcare contract that our patients purchase because we are in a profession that is dedicated to healing and helping people and we cannot heal people if we cannot see them.

But unfortunately attitudes by providers are starting to change. More and more providers are starting to make tough decisions. Some are no longer taking new patients in a healthcare plan or are retiring early and adding to the provider shortage, while others terminating their contracts and offering cash for service. All of these situations are bad for patients and only weaken our healthcare delivery system. What has led to this exodus and the changing climate in Connecticut specifically? One of the main reasons is the inability to collectively negotiate contract terms with insurers or deal with provisions in contracts that are especially egregious. This committee has heard about the down-coding of services, unilateral changes to contracts and non-disclosure of protocols which have a financial impact on a physicians practice at the time a contract is offered but there are new issues adding to these transgressions. Physicians are now faced with contracts that contain provisions that limit what they can charge for non-covered services. An example of this would be a refraction, a service that measures how your eyes judge distance and reading. Some carriers believe this service is outside of a medical eye exam and will not reimburse a provider for this. It is in their minds not necessary and yet they on their explanation of benefits after stating it is a non- covered service will add that you cannot charge more than xx dollars. We have also seen insurers try to dictate pricing on non-covered benefits like premium inner ocular lens for cataract surgery, contact lenses and hearing devices. Can you imagine entering into a contract for specific services at a specific rate and then having a clause in there that states "oh





and by the way for any other services that you may perform that we will not pay for you cannot charge more than X dollars?

Ludacris is the term most would use after hearing about this situation. It is also part of the reason physicians are having to make these tough decisions to leave the state, retire early, not accept new patients or stop accepting insurances. It is unfortunate that we have to come to this committee on matters such as these but physicians cannot be left with just two choices; sign the contract with these egregious clauses or walk away from the contract and thousands of patients. Please help stop this unfair trade practice and disallow insurers from writing clauses in their provider contracts that limit what fees healthcare providers can charge for non-covered services.

Thank you for your consideration on this important matter

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