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**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
INSURANCE AND REAL ESTATE COMMITTEE
Thursday, February 5, 2015**

PROPOSED SB 21, An Act Concerning Health Insurance Coverage Of Abuse-Deterrent Opioid Analgesics

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **Proposed SB 21, An Act Concerning Health Insurance Coverage Of Abuse-Deterrent Opioid Analgesics**. CHA supports the bill.

Connecticut hospitals treat everyone who comes through their doors 24 hours a day, regardless of ability to pay.

Before commenting on the bill, it's important to point out that 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.

The development of voluntary opioid prescribing guidelines to help Emergency Department (ED) staff treat patients with chronic pain conditions is an example of such a solution. Formulated by hospital ED directors in collaboration with other prescribers and the Department of Public Health, the guidelines will help reduce the inappropriate use of opioids while preserving the vital role of hospital EDs in treating patients with emergent medical conditions. The development of the guidelines is part of a broader statewide strategy to reduce the impact of opioid addiction, and they demonstrate the willingness of hospitals and physicians to engage in multi-sector collaboration with the state to reduce the misuse and abuse of opioids and other prescription drugs in Connecticut.

Opioids are drugs that reduce pain signals to the brain. They can be a safe and effective tool to manage pain, but they may be misused or abused by people seeking their euphoric effect. Opioid abuse can lead to addiction, chronic illness, or death. Over the past four years, EDs have seen a 50 percent increase in opioid overdoses. In 2014, there were nearly 1,900 Connecticut hospital ED visits related to opioid overdoses.

Abuse-deterrent drugs are manufactured with physical, chemical, or other barriers that make abuse more difficult or less attractive to patients. These drugs are emerging as another important tool for addressing prescription opioid abuse. CHA believes that a statewide strategy to combat opioid abuse should include a requirement that health insurance policies provide coverage for prescription drugs for abuse-deterrent opioid analgesics. The availability of insurance coverage for these drugs will increase opportunities for long-term substance abuse recovery for patients who suffer as a result of the misuse of prescription opioids, and provide a valuable tool for healthcare providers to treat patients suffering from chronic pain, while minimizing the potential for addiction and abuse.

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