



**TESTIMONY OF
KOLA AKINDELE
SUBMITTED TO THE
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2015**

HB 6965, An Act Concerning The Preservation Of Municipal Tax Bases

Good morning, Chairwoman Osten and Chairman Miller my name is Kola Akindele and I am the community Relations Manager at Hartford Healthcare, Hartford Region, where I oversee community benefit programs and activities. I appreciate the opportunity to speak in opposition to HB 6965.

Hartford Healthcare has an important role in this state has a major employer and contributor to the economy. With over 18,000 employees, Hartford Healthcare is one of the largest employers in the state. Our five acute care hospitals provide high-quality primary and specialty care to local communities. We spend millions of dollars annually on salaries, medical supplies, food, equipment, and facility expansions and improvements. These dollars have a multiplier effect on the larger economy, generating jobs, spending, and economic activity within the region. We have, as a system, had a direct economic impact on our communities of more than \$4 billion.

We not only play an important role because of our incidental impact as a major employer, but because of our purposeful impact, the way in which we actively strive to apply our expertise as hospitals to the needs of our community. The cornerstone of this work is the many community benefit programs, we offer, aimed at addressing specific health needs of our local community. These programs are often a result of a comprehensive needs assessment which assesses the health and social needs of our community residents, particularly the most vulnerable amongst us. They focus on improving community health and wellness, addressing health disparities, and ultimately reducing health care costs in the long run. We currently partner with more than 200 organizations, statewide, ranging from small community based organizations to local health and school departments to design and deliver services to improve the lives of members of our community. Through its many programs, Hartford Healthcare provided the poorest and most vulnerable with quality healthcare, went into neighborhoods to engage, educate, and screen residents, contributed to community building activities, and trained and educated tomorrow's caregivers. Just in FY' 2013, we provided over \$200 million in community benefit, including over \$21 million in charity care.

I have provided below specific examples of community benefit programs we provide at Hartford Hospital, where I work.

Take Charge of Your Health - \$ 83,779

The Take Charge of Your Health initiative is a comprehensive approach to addressing the health prospects of minorities and the disparities relative to the rate at which minorities suffer from chronic diseases like hypertension, diabetes, cancers and numerous other health challenges.

The Project makes direct contact with persons, in settings like barbers shops and churches, who are in need of care and who may not have a primary care physician or resources to obtain screenings. We, then make the effort to provide screenings free of charge and connect the patient to primary care physicians or specialists when necessary. The educational component is primary as we connect with individuals not only by providing screenings for cholesterol, hypertension, diabetes and cancer; but also with information and onsite dietary consultation to help them make healthy food and nutrition choices and incorporate exercise in order to combat obesity. In a year and a half we've touched over 3000 lives and connected hundreds to primary care physicians and dozens to health insurance.

Hartford Mobile Market - \$20,000

As a response to the identified need for more access to fresh fruits and vegetables, Hartford Hospital became a founding partner of the Hartford Mobile Market, a program to bring fresh fruits and vegetables year round to city neighborhoods with limited or no access to healthy and affordable foods.

Subsidized Health Services (clinical services that are provided, despite a financial loss, because they meet a community need) - \$3,492,073

- Women's ambulatory: Women's Ambulatory Health Services provided to uninsured women, including services such as ObGyn, uro-gynecology and prenatal testing.
- Mobile Mammography Van: The Mobile Mammography Van travels into the community to provide mammograms to women regardless of insurance coverage. Its primary purpose is to reach uninsured, underserved women who in addition may not have access to transportation.
- Brownstone Clinic: Provides quality primary and specialty care to thousands of uninsured and underinsured in the community.
- Institute of Living Outpatient Clinics: Provides behavioral health care to uninsured and underinsured in the community.

Healthcare Support Services - \$160,890

This program provides financial assistance to low income patients for such things as rent, utilities, gasoline, transportation, meals, and insurance premiums, so they may focus on their healthcare and healing.

Drug Assistance Program - \$121,491

The drug assistance program provides assistance to help low income patients pay for medication and receive free medication through manufacturer compassionate-use programs. This program contributes to maintaining Hartford Healthcare's high quality standard of care as well as serving to improve patient adherence to prescribed medication regimen

Southside Institutions Neighborhood Association (SINA)

We are a founding partner of SINA, a collaborative effort among Hartford Hospital, Connecticut Children's Medical Center and Trinity College to promote economic development and improve the quality of life of residents in south central Hartford. This is done through construction and rehabilitation of affordable housing for residents in the neighborhoods surrounding these institutions, supporting local business, and strengthening and supporting local schools. To date, the institutions have invested \$17 million in SINA to support economic development in the south end, which has resulted in 83 affordable apartment units and over 60 homes for working families. This effort has provided \$283, 000 in tax revenue per year that Hartford would not have received if properties remained abandoned or unutilized

Hartford Hospital, through the Homeownership Incentive Program (HIP), provided down payment assistance, to the tune of \$ 100,000 thus far, to support our employees, who are first time home buyers, purchasing homes in the south end of Hartford

Hartford Promise

Hartford Hospital made a \$1 million contribution over a four year period to a scholarship program that supports Hartford Public School students by providing financial assistance to those who are eligible so they can attend college

These programs are a recognition on our part of our ability, due to our tax exempt status, to relieve government burden, by offering significant resources and expertise to address specific health needs in the community.

Over the past few years we've endured cuts in hospital funding and the hospital tax, currently, with the Governor's proposed budget, Hartford Healthcare is facing \$41 million in cuts over the next two years. HB6965 would place yet another financial burden on our system. Needless to say, it would impact negatively our ability to maintain community benefit at their current level and contribute to the economic vitality of the communities we serve.

I urge you to oppose HB 6965. Thank you for consideration of our position. For more information please contact Kola Akindele at (860) 972-4595.

