

Raised Bill No. 6938

*AN ACT CONCERNING THE DELIVERY OF QUALITY HEALTH CARE AND
MODERNIZATION OF HEALTH CARE FACILITIES.*

Testimony for the Public Health Committee – March 11, 2015

Presented by: James B. Stirling

My business has 45 employees and administers health claims for CT employers. That puts me in touch with the current hospital delivery system.

While I generally do not favor government intervention in the private market, the hospital market is so out of balance, and so essential to a positive business climate, that I feel the state has a responsibility to step in to restore the common good. That's why I support RB 6938 and other hospital oversight, transparency and reform bills.

Our hospitals were established to serve the common good and to help our residents be healthy and productive. But market forces have pushed us off this path. To remain open, facilities must focus on high margin services instead of common community health needs. Large systems have bought up individual practices and increase costs with a "facility fee." Local facilities struggle to meet their mission. Milford Hospital recently announced that they will no longer deliver babies. This market is so off balance that a local hospital cannot meet the most basic community need.

The alternative is a modern, integrated, community focused, decentralized system that focuses on essential, but low margin care: mental health, chronic disease, substance abuse, and routine medical events, like delivering babies. Sandy Hook teaches us that we need an integrated mental health system. SARS and Swine Flu epidemics confirm we need a community based system to coordinate with emergency services at the state and local level, and with DSS. We need a system that helps a diabetic change behaviors and a family deal with substance abuse or a child with asthma.

When I hire someone, I want them to be productive right away. I want to know that they have had good health care. Strong community hospitals that focus on basic employee needs, instead of high margin specialty care, will help our residents be more productive. That could be one more reason to stay in Connecticut.

Please don't be swayed by arguments about private sector intervention. Health care delivery has changed over the years, and is now part of the common good, like roads and utilities. Market forces cannot alone restore balance to this sector. We need the State to help guide us back to the reasons we have hospitals, so that we can all, not just the large health systems, enjoy better fiscal, business and personal health.

Thank you.

James Stirling
20 Miller Road, Bethany, CT 06524
(203) 676-5938