



**CONNECTICUT
CENTER FOR A
NEW ECONOMY**

March 11, 2015

To: Co-Chairpersons Senator Terry B. Gerratana and Rep. Matthew Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee

My name is Imam Kashif Abdul-Karim. I am the Imam at the Muhammad Islamic Center of Greater Hartford on Hungerford Street, I serve on the Board for the Council of American Islamic Relations, the Board of the Connecticut Center for a New Economy, and on the United States

Commission for Civil Rights, CT Chapter.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony today in support of S.B. 809, S.B. 810, S.B. 813, S.B. 815, S.B. 954 and H.B. 6938.

Connecticut needs to do a better job of understanding hospitals and maintaining access to affordable care.

Every Friday people come to pray at the Muhammad Islamic Center, just two blocks from here. And every single Friday someone brings a hospital bill to me at the Mosque, a bill that their family cannot pay. They ask for help from our community. The bills are getting bigger and we are finding it harder and harder for our community to raise enough money to help them.

In March of 2009 more than a hundred religious leaders joined me at my Hungerford Street Mosque to march here to the Capitol to call for health care reform. We called ourselves the Interfaith Fellowship for Universal Health Care and all of us were helping our congregations shoulder the burden for those with no health coverage or those with lousy coverage. More people have coverage now, but as hospital bills get bigger we worry about losing access to affordable care when we still have more to do to expand it.

I urge you to pass legislation such as S.B. 813 to require hospitals to report what they charge for procedures. I see the bills every week and there is way to predict what care costs. Such extreme differences in charges for the same procedure should not be allowed. We need to get control of hospital expenses but to do that we need to first know what they are.

I am retired from the Department of Corrections and the Department of Children and Families so my family has health coverage through the State. In this year when there are state budget cuts proposed that will affect services for babies, for the elderly, and for the disabled, I urge you to get information about hospital prices so the State can be a more responsible purchaser of health care. We can save money to avoid these draconian budget cuts.

I urge you also to eliminate facility fees at the clinics purchased by hospitals. These are nothing but a way for hospitals to add more to the bill. S.B. 809 restricts these fees for some procedures but should go farther.

As Connecticut considers allowing corporations with an explicit profit motive to buy major hospitals we must also step up and protect the interest of patients and their families. We need a more transparent, affordable, accessible system.

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The Connecticut Center for a New Economy (CCNE) promotes economic, social and racial justice for Connecticut's unemployed and working people.