

Statement of Lorraine Skibitcky
Connecticut General Assembly Public Health Committee
March 10, 2015
Senate Bills 809, 813, 815

My name is Lorraine Skibitcky. I am an employee at Yale University and am a UNITE HERE Local 34 member. I also volunteer my time on a Local 34 Healthcare Committee that has worked hard to engage our members on an interest we share with Yale ---- keeping healthcare costs down.

Through engaging with the University, our Union has developed several initiatives:

- 1) We have created incentives for our members to join a tightly controlled staff model HMO, which is much less expensive to the University than other options, and costs our members nothing for the premium.
- 2) We created an affordable 3rd option that is both cost effective and good for our members.
- 3) Created a liaison position that serves as a resource for our HMO population to answer questions and provide guidance to those members.

I have volunteered my own personal time to help with a few healthcare outreach programs:

A) a "know your numbers" health awareness program designed to raise awareness about our members' own health so that they don't learn they are diabetic or have high blood pressure through a costly and perhaps life threatening ER visit. We called it "Take charge of your health!"

B) Encouraging members to attend a health fair to know your numbers

C) Chronic Disease Self-Management Program to encourage members to put their health first and learn to manage their chronic conditions

All of these are programs that reduce cost, and are good for our members.

My schpiel to our members is: It's our part of keeping healthcare costs down in a way that is good for you.

We give them hope that what they do matters.

If hospital prices skyrocket because there is no competition, all of our work to do the right thing about both cost and good health may go to waste. Our employer will come to the bargaining table and demand increased employee costs that we can't afford.

We're doing our part to control costs and improve outcomes. Our programs are what all the experts say we should do.

But the state needs to step in to prevent hospital monopolies from undermining that success. I encourage the committee to work to create an agency to monitor and control health costs, as outlined in SB 815, to require that all prices be fully transparent as proposed in SB 813, and to eliminate the facility fees that are ratcheting up costs for health plans and individuals when hospitals take over doctors' practices.