CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2015

SB 856, An Act Concerning Language Interpreters In Hospitals

HB 5894, An Act Increasing The Availability Of Licensed Medical Interpreters For Limited English Proficiency Patients

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **SB 856, An Act Concerning Language Interpreters In Hospitals**, and **HB 5894, An Act Increasing The Availability Of Licensed Medical Interpreters For Limited English Proficiency Patients.** CHA supports the overall goals of ensuring that patients are provided with culturally competent and linguistically appropriate care.

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.

CHA supports SB 856 and its approach to providing culturally competent and linguistically appropriate care. However, CHA has concerns about the requirements in HB 5894, which would be unattainable by hospitals with the existing limited number of medical interpreters.

Providing culturally competent and linguistically appropriate care, eliminating health disparities, and achieving health equity are well-established priorities of Connecticut hospitals. Connecticut hospitals participate in the CHA Diversity Collaborative, a first-in-the-nation program to address these objectives, which has been recognized as a national model. The newly enhanced *National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health and Health Care* (CLAS Standards) is a tool that has driven much of the Diversity Collaborative' s work.

The CLAS Standards, developed through the Office of Minority Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, are intended to advance health equity, improve quality, and help eliminate healthcare disparities. The CLAS Standards are increasingly included in or referenced by local and national legislative, regulatory, and accreditation mandates.

The CLAS Standards support the creation of policies and require management accountability for achieving culturally appropriate objectives in hospital planning and operations. Within the CLAS Standards, the Principal Standard guides hospitals to provide effective, equitable, understandable, and respectful quality care and services. These services must be responsive to patients' diverse cultural beliefs and practices, preferred languages, health literacy, and other communication needs.

The CLAS Standards include: offering language assistance to individuals who have limited English proficiency and/or other communication needs at no cost to them; facilitating timely access to all healthcare and services; informing all individuals of the availability of language assistance services clearly and in their preferred language (both verbally and in writing); ensuring the competence of individuals providing language assistance – recognizing that the use of untrained individuals and/or minors as interpreters should be avoided; and providing easy-to-understand print and multimedia materials and signage in languages commonly used by those in a hospital's service area.

Generations of Connecticut families have trusted Connecticut hospitals to provide care we can count on, and supporting SB 856 is further evidence of that commitment.

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