
***H.B. No. 5044 - An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal
Year Ending June 30, 2017.***

Co-Chairs, Ranking Members, and members of the Committee, I currently attend the University of Connecticut where I am an intern with Eastern Area Health Education Center (AHEC), Inc. AHEC provides me with resources and hands on experiences to explore different health careers. Through AHEC, I have learned and practiced valuable skills such as leadership, volunteer service and cultural sensitivity. Without AHEC, I wouldn't have been able to meet inspiring health professionals and implement meaningful service learning projects in my community. I am a resident of Bridgeport, CT but attend the Storrs campus.

The CT AHEC Program or network directly supports primary care workforce development in the state by "connecting students to careers in health, professionals to communities, and communities to better health." Funded since 1997, the CT AHEC Program provides state-wide services to more than 10,000 residents, annually (<http://www.publichealth.uconn.edu/ct-ahec.html>). As the demographics of the state continue to change, the primary care workforce must expand and respond to meet those changes. The CT AHEC Program is an invaluable resources to address these challenges at both a state and local level.

The CT AHEC Program utilizes federal, state and private funding to support:

- Inter-professional education and community based training programs for health professions students
- Promotion and retention of primary care providers in collaboration with state agencies
- Cultural competence and medical interpreting training to health professionals and trainees
- Dissemination and recruitment of health professional trainees in the National Health Service Corps
- Continuing medical education programs for public health and health care professionals
- pipeline educational programs to raise awareness of health careers for pre-health professions learners

As part of the primary care workforce development in the state, the CT AHEC Program provides leadership for the State Innovation Model grant's Community Health Workforce Development and Integration (<http://www.healthreform.ct.gov/ohri/site/default.asp>). Bringing collaborative stakeholders together to build infrastructure, policy and sustainability to the development of a Community Health Worker workforce in Connecticut. Likewise, CT AHEC's support of the Health Occupations and Technology Careers in Connecticut (HOT Guide) provides residents with an invaluable resource to learn about health and biotechnology careers and opportunities in the state (www.healthcareersinct.com).

Supported by federal, state and private dollars, the CT AHEC Program Office is located at UConn Health in Farmington, CT. The 4 regional AHEC Centers in collaboration with the Program Office extend UConn Health's reach state-wide. The AHEC Program responds to local needs and partnerships that address community health needs which include oral health, veteran's mental health, youth mental health first aid, teen health literacy, homeless and migrant farm worker access to health care.

I have been fortunate to be part of this program which allowed me to further my life and educational experiences. As an intern for AHEC, I have gained versatile skills that I will utilize in further internships and job endeavors. AHEC gave me the opportunity and the resources I needed to give back to a community that I care about. By working to educate and promote healthy lifestyles, I feel like we're working towards a greater future. My most rewarding experience has been our MLK Day Health Fair held at Generations in Willimantic, CT. Reflecting on the health fair, I could see the impact we have on the community- the community was engaged and left with the assets to live healthier lives. The community relies on the efforts of places like AHEC and the students at UConn to educate and support them. I also can't stress the emphasis we put on equality for all social classes. As a freshman intern, I have also been exposed to how big of an impact AHEC has on not the community by on my university experience. I was fortunate enough to work with the College Health Service Corps, where I met self-motivated students and I saw first-hand the impact they had on the Willimantic community. Because of my experience, I have solidified my future career path.

AHEC has fueled my interest in public health and I hope to be a participant of CHSC. I hope by the time I get involved in the CHSC, we will have the necessary resources and finances to continue.

In addition, Eastern Area Health Education Center (AHEC), Inc. is part of the Connecticut AHEC Network (CTAHEC) and was the first nonprofit 501(c)(3) AHEC to open its doors in Connecticut on **February 29, 1996**, celebrating 20 years as an established organization this month.

I cannot express the consequences and unreplaceable void this would leave for the state of Connecticut. I personally feel that if CT AHEC Network is not restored its funding that it would be very detrimental to the community.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony. Below is my contact information for your convenience.

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