TESTIMONY OF DARCY BARAN SUBMITTED TO THE APPROPRIATIONS AND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON FEBRUARY 10, 2016

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 work at Regional School District # 11, Parish Hill Middle/high School where I collaborate with the Youth Health Service Corps (YHSC) program with Eastern Area Health Education Center (AHEC), Inc. The YHSC program provides students with resources and hands on experiences to explore different health careers. Through the YHSC program, I have had students demonstrate valuable skills such as leadership, volunteer service and cultural sensitivity. Without the YHSC, I wouldn't have students meet inspiring health professionals, obtain CPR certification or implement meaningful service learning projects in my community. I am a resident of Windham.

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 collaborate with Eastern CT Area Health Education Center which allowed students to further their life and educational experiences. Parish Hill has been able to provide students with hands on, service based learning through a 9 week class offered two/three times per year. In addition students have been able to become CPR certified. Due to our small rural community, this is an important additional resource that we have been able to offer our students. In addition, we hope that this opportunity will encourage students to become interested in the health care field as this is a shortage area due to lack of trained first responders in our region. To address this need, we started working with Eastern AHEC four years ago.

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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