

**TESTIMONY OF QUYNH-LAN DAO 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 attend the University of Connecticut where I am a Collegiate Health Service Corps (CHSC) participant with Eastern Area Health Education Center (AHEC), Inc. Collegiate Health Service Corps provides me with resources and hands on experiences to explore different health careers. Through CHSC, I have learned and practiced valuable skills such as leadership, volunteer service and cultural sensitivity. Without CHSC, I wouldn't have been able to meet inspiring health professionals, obtain CPR certification or implement meaningful service learning projects in my community. I am a resident of Trumbull, CT.

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. I am a senior in the Honors program at UConn, majoring in Physiology and Neurobiology and minoring in Human Rights. As a CHSC participant, I have had the opportunity to become immersed in and provide health care education to communities around UConn. I hope to attend medical school, and I saw CHSC as a way to explore facets of health care beyond a clinical setting. The summer before my junior year, I studied abroad in Cape Town, South Africa. I worked in a clinic that provided free primary care services to an impoverished population. Seeing the health disparities caused by socioeconomic inequality made me reflect on our health care system and inspired me to work with underserved communities once back at UConn. CHSC has allowed me to do exactly that, connecting me with people I would never otherwise meet. Prior to participating in CHSC, I had never been inside a subsidized housing complex. My placement at John Ashton Towers in Willimantic became much more than just an opportunity to provide health care information to an underserved group of people. It taught me the importance of providing culturally relevant

information and allowed me to be more comfortable meeting people whose backgrounds differed vastly from mine. Through the semester, we had a core group of residents who showed up every week for “Health Bingo”. We had sprawling discussions that would start with the week’s health topic and end with us sharing personal stories about anything that came to mind. One resident talked about her experiences of being a nurse at Mansfield Training School and Hospital, which was a state-run facility for people with mental illness. It was amazing to hear her experiences as a nurse in an institution during a time when mental illness was not well understood. Without CHSC, I would never have befriended this extraordinary group of people. Putting yourself in an unfamiliar environment can be daunting, but CHSC allowed me to engage in an exchange of information and experiences with people who have so much wisdom to share.

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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