



TESTIMONY OF EASTERN AHEC 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.

Eastern Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Inc., appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony concerning **H.B. No. 5044- An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017**. Eastern AHEC **proposes** that funding for the CT AHEC Network be **maintained** at **\$400,643** with no further reductions. The AHEC Network is part of a **federally matched initiative** which is based at the University of Connecticut Health Center and is implemented through four regional centers located in the Willimantic, Hartford, Waterbury, and Bridgeport areas. The four centers enable the AHEC Program to carry out local programs with great efficiency. As a statewide program, it functions locally to provide high quality, efficient, effective and flexible services that meet local needs. While also assuring that Connecticut residents have access to critical resources and programs that are both timely and essential in developing a healthcare workforce which is cost effective, culturally competent, Inter-Professional and responsive to the healthcare needs of the state. Reducing or eliminating any further funds will negatively impact services offered locally, regionally, and statewide.

Regional Reach

Eastern AHEC Inc., is a nonprofit 501(c) 3, established in 1996, aims to *enhance access to culturally and linguistically appropriate healthcare education and increase the diversity, quality, and distribution of future healthcare professionals*. Regionally, EAHEC **primarily serves over 3,000 rural and urban** participants a year with low socioeconomically status including, Veterans. Eastern AHEC’s geographic reach for regional programming are within **Windham and New London Counties** respectively. A list cities and towns in each county are illustrated in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Eastern AHEC Service Area

COUNTY	TOWNS
New London County	Bozrah, Colchester, East Lyme, Franklin, Griswold, Groton, Lebanon, Ledyard, Lisbon, Lyme, Montville, New London, North Stonington, Norwich, Old Lyme, Preston, Salem, Sprague, Stonington, Voluntown, and Waterford
Windham County	Ashford, Brooklyn, Canterbury, Chaplin, Eastford, Hampton, Killingly, Plainfield, Pomfret, Putnam, Scotland, Sterling, Thompson, Willimantic, Windham, and Woodstock



EASTERN CT AHEC'S KEY INITIATIVES INCLUDE;

- Career exploration pipeline programs
 - Youth Health Service Corps (YHSC)
 - Collegiate Health Service Corps (CHSC)
 - Interprofessional education student-lead medical clinics
- Medical Interpreter Program (MIP)
- Access Health CT Education and Enrollment Support
- Executive management and facilitation of public health statewide initiatives as a contractor
- CEU/ CME Course Offerings
- Recruitment & Retention Activities (RRA)
Health Professions

AHEC Statewide Reach

For the past 18 years the Connecticut AHEC Network and its the four regional Centers have successfully leveraged collaboration and partnerships with key stakeholders with a focus on Connecticut's health care workforce. We have been dedicated and **committed to reducing and eliminating health disparities** by **collaborating and creating partnerships** with organizations that aim to improve healthcare access both on a national and statewide level. The capacity by which AHEC has collaborated has been either in a lead role or has contributed in leadership Advising, Officer, Co-Chair, or general member of core collaborative groups both regionally and statewide.

AHEC's mission and goals directly support healthcare workforce development in the state:

- **Recruiting** underrepresented minority and disadvantaged students into the health professions.
- **Partnering with community organizations** to address local health issues.
- **Providing continuing education** that improves the care received by vulnerable populations.
- **Providing outreach** to underserved communities
- **Developing and supporting community based interprofessional training** opportunities for health professions and pre-health professions students.

The AHEC Network engages more than 10,000 learners annually from 30+ secondary schools, 9 colleges/universities and 10 health professional schools state-wide. Through its' **on-line health careers manual (HOT Guide – Health Occupations and Technology Careers (www.healthcareersinct.com))**, AHEC provides current and accurate information on CT based health professions programs, admissions prerequisites, training, credentialing and roles of over 86 health careers to students, parents, teachers, guidance counselors, librarians more than 1 million times each year. AHEC provides continuing education for the state's healthcare professionals through a variety of mediums and topics including: chronic disease management, immunization and public health, cultural competence, utilization of medical interpreters and Community Health Workers, etc. **Table 2** illustrates example programs and technical support that are currently provided within the organization's objectives.

Table 2: Eastern AHEC Network Programs and Technical Assistant Support



Objective	Focus /# of Learners Engaged Annually	Programs
Diversity	Health Profession Recruitment /K-12 & Adult Learners, 5,100 learners annually	Summer Camps, After -School Enrichment (partnering with Husky Sport), HOSA, Health Promotion with Upward Bound/Gear-Up TRIO programs, Tobacco/Smoking Prevention Program “Don’t Let Your Life Go Up In Smoke”, Middle School Health Careers Exploration Program, Youth Health Service Corps, Collegiate Health Service Corps, Internships, Louise Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation, Rowe Scholars, Heart Strong, AmeriCorps, Medical Interpreter, Community Health Worker training programs, Voices Against Violence, College & Careers Preparation Workshops, Public Health (Body Beads, Emergency Preparedness, HIV 101, Nutrition & Exercise), Practical Health Skills, Internships, Support of Rowe Scholars and Louise Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) programming at UCONN as well as training of Community Health Workers (CHWs).
Diversity/ Distribution	Clinical Training of Health Profession Students/350 learners annually	Emergency Medicine Services, Urban Service Track, Student/Residents Experiences and Rotations in Community Health (SEARCH), Migrant Farm Worker Clinic, Covenant Soup Kitchen & Medical Clinic, CT Mission of Mercy Free Dental Clinic, National Primary Care Week Community Screening Clinics and Health Fairs, Support to UConn School of Medicine Student Continuity Practice and Multidisciplinary Ambulatory Experience in identifying community based placements as well as Internal Medicine/Family Medicine residency programs through electives and community based training.
Distribution/ Quality	Educational Support and Technical Assistance for Public Health and Health Care Providers/550 learners annually	Continuing Medical Education, PCCAMP (Primary Care Career Advising and Mentoring Program), SEARCH Preceptor Training, CT Public Health Association Annual Meeting, CT Department of Public Health’s Multi-Cultural Health Network/ Taskforces on Oral Health for Older Adults/Sexual Assault Prevention/National Health Service Corps Primary Care Workforce Recruitment & Retention initiatives/HPV, Veteran’s and Youth Mental Health First Aid as well as Community Health Worker training.

On a national level the AHEC networks have collaborations with National Health Service Corps, National Association of Medical Minority Educators, National Rural Health Association, National Health Services Corps, National Student Clearing House, Veterans Mental Health Initiative, and many others. Over the years, the Connecticut AHEC network has collaborated with over 290 federal, state and community partners **Table 3** though not exclusive, illustrates an example of community based partners of whom we worked with over the years. Other partnerships have included higher educational institutions where programs such as the Collegiate Health Service Programs (CHSC), Inter-professional Education, and Continuing Education trainings that promotes workforce development among interpreters. See **Table 4**.

Table 3. CTAHEC Network Collaborative Community Partners



CT Allied Health Workforce Board	Community Based Organization
CT Center for Primary Care	Department of Social Services
Community Health Center Association	Institute for Community Research
CT Department of Public Health	Local Department of Health
CT Hospital Association	Lupus Foundation of Connecticut
CT State Dental Association	National Kidney Foundation of CT
CT Allied Health Workforce Board	ProHealth Physicians
	Veterans Health Administration

Table 4. Institutional Partners

Capital Community College	University of Bridgeport
Central Connecticut State University	University of Connecticut (various campuses)
Eastern Connecticut State University	University of Hartford
Housatonic Community College	University of St. Joseph's College
Quinnipiac University Physician Assistant Program	Western Connecticut State University
Quinebaug Valley Community College	Wesleyan College
Southern Connecticut State University	
Trinity College	

The AHEC network core funding comes from state appropriated funds complimented with a federal match. To leverage our reach, the AHEC network continuous seek other various **financial sources** that vary from other state or local foundations. **Acquiring any further losses of state support will jeopardize our federal match along with other financial resources that aid with sustaining our organization.** In an era of healthcare transformation, **maintaining the \$400,643 AHEC line item included within block grant funding to UConn Health.** It is critical to assure that the CT AHEC Network will be there to deliver its unique services and programs to our residents as we create the diverse, well trained and cost effective interprofessional healthcare workforce that Connecticut requires and deserves.

Thank you for your supporting the AHEC network. For additional information, please contact, Maritza Bond, MPH, Executive Director at (860) 465-8281 ext. 402 or bond@easternctahec.org