



**TESTIMONY OF HECTOR GONZALEZ 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, my name is Hector Gonzalez, Language Services Coordinator for Eastern Area Health Education Center, Inc. is a non-profit organization in which our main goal is to provide to deliver culturally and linguistically appropriate health care education.

My primary responsibility within the organization is to provide interpreting training to individuals who are in the medical field who work with the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) community. Eastern AHEC, is the only organization that provided this service to the entire state of Connecticut.

Eastern AHEC's Medical Interpreter Program assess hundreds of staff members from Hospitals around Connecticut in making sure that they are proficient in English and targeted language. We also have trained around 200 people to become qualified medical interpreters. This creates a better outcome for LEP patients when they seek health care. It's important to support Eastern AHEC,'s programs, the community really is the one that serve those in need of health education.

Eastern AHEC, Inc. is also the only organization that provides CPR/First Aid training in English and Spanish. Hundreds of people can benefit from this training in Spanish. Eastern AHEC is always looking to provide great services to those in need. Other programs that the organization is very proud to have is the Youth Health Service Corps. A program that focus to help high school student to explore health careers.

For the past 18 years, the Connecticut AHEC Network, provides Connecticut residents with critical resources and programs that are critical and in demand for developing and enforcing a stronger healthcare workforce which is cost effective, culturally competent, inter-professional and responsive to the health care needs of the state.

The CT AHEC Network is state wide and consists four-regional centers located in Willimantic, Hartford, Waterbury, and Bridgeport. The program office is based at the University of Connecticut Health Center. As a statewide program, it functions locally to provide high quality and cost effective services that meet the needs of the community. Those of us in this field see the importance and impact that these programs have for the community.

AHEC's mission and goals directly support health care workforce development in the state. Focus areas for the AHEC include:

- ♣ Provide and train medical interpreters to facilitate the importance of conveying medical information to patient and providers.
- ♣ Provide and train high school and college students CPR/First Aid in English and Spanish languages.
- ♣ Provide and assist UConn students with a free health care clinic offered twice a month to the under privileged community. The free health clinic offers free services to those in need who are underserve and uninsured.
- ♣ Recruiting underrepresented minority and disadvantaged students into the health professions.
- ♣ Partnering with community organizations like The Covenant Soup Kitchen, UConn school of medicine, Generation Family Health Center, Access Agency and the dental school of UConn to address local health issues. Free health and dental care, health education, free medical interpretation and onsite medical consultation.

- ♣ Providing continuing education that improves the care received by vulnerable populations.
- ♣ Providing outreach to vulnerable populations (migrant farm workers, medically and dentally underserved, homeless, etc.)
- ♣ Developing and supporting community based inter-professional training opportunities for health professions and pre-health professions students.

The CT AHEC Network engages more than 7,000 learners annually from 30+ secondary schools, 13 colleges/universities and 12 health professional schools state-wide. Through its on-line health careers manual (HOT Guide – Health Occupations and Technology Careers (www.healthcareersinct.com), the CT AHEC Network provides current and accurate information on CT based health professions programs, admissions prerequisites, training, credentialing and roles of over 85 health careers to students, parents, teachers, guidance counselors, librarians more than 1 million times each year. AHEC provides continuing education for the state's health care professionals through a variety of mediums and topics including: chronic disease management, immunization and public health, Veterans' mental health, cultural competence, utilization of medical interpreters and Community Health Workers, etc.

As person who is heavily involved with the community representing the Medical Interpreter Program and Coordinator of the Covenant Soup Kitchen Health Clinic for Eastern AHEC, Inc., I personally feel that cutting state support will eliminated very essential services to our community. Our clinic is a great place for Medical Students from the University of Connecticut to experience helping those who are in great need. They work with their community and gain experience that later can take to their professional career. We are leaving on a time where the people from Connecticut are afraid of that they are not been taking seriously. They should not be dealing with this concerning every year. Connecticut as state will be spending money elsewhere to accommodate the void. These programs are impactful and will be detrimental if the funding and CT AHEC Network is eliminated from Connecticut. Please, see the pros and cons of this change and you will see that the pros will have a better positive impact in our community. Therefore, I believe that it would the best interest for the state of Connecticut to leave this funding in.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this evening and for your ongoing support Eastern AHEC's budget. I urge you to find a way to restore these cuts so that UConn Health can continue to provide tremendous benefits to our students and patients and to Connecticut's economy and future.

Sincerely,

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