

TESTIMONY OF FIRST HEATHER LAIDLAW 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 attended the Interpreting in Health Care and Community Settings course by Eastern Area Health Education Center (AHEC), Inc. The program provided me with the opportunity to learn about medical interpreting, and form a support network with other underemployed bilinguals. Through the program I have learned and practiced valuable skills. I'm currently a freelance medical interpreter and regular interpreting volunteer at the Rhode Island Free Clinic. Without the class, I wouldn't have been able to meet current and aspiring interpreters. I'm a resident of Groton, 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 really miss the class and the friendships I formed.

Thank you,

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