

**TESTIMONY OF KATHLEEN LEBLANC SUBMITTED TO THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
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 am Human Services Program Director at Naugatuck Valley Community College in Waterbury, CT. Naugatuck Valley Community College collaborates with Northwestern AHEC on a number of important initiatives including providing Mental Health First Aid certification to our Human Services students. The training, provided by Northwestern AHEC staff, is an important component of our students' learning. Through Mental Health First Aid Training, my students learn how to recognize signs and symptoms of mental illness and how to help someone who is struggling with a mental health challenge or illness. Access to care for people who suffer from mental illness is a state priority and Mental Health First Aid is an important public health strategy in our efforts to meet this priority.

The CT AHEC Network directly supports access to health care for vulnerable populations by “connecting students to careers in health, professionals to communities, and communities to better health.” Funded since 1997, the CT AHEC Network 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, access to primary care must respond to meet those changes: the CT AHEC Network is an invaluable resources to address these challenges.

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 Network 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. 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 ([www.healthcareersinct.com](http://www.healthcareersinct.com)).

Supported by federal, state and private dollars, the CT AHEC Network's Program Office is located at UConn Health. The 4 regional AHEC Centers, in collaboration with the Program Office, extend UConn Health's reach state-wide. The CT AHEC Network responds to local community health needs which include oral health, veteran's mental health, youth and adult mental health first aid, teen health literacy, homeless and migrant farm worker access to health care.

It is my opinion that maintaining funding for AHEC is important to ensuring access to health care for our state's most vulnerable citizens.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony. Below is my contact information for your convenience.

Kathleen LeBlanc  
10 Marion Rd, Bethany, CT  
Kleblanc@nv.edu  
203-393-2224