

**TESTIMONY OF KAREN PIANTEK SUBMITTED TO THE APPROPRIATIONS AND HIGHER EDUCATION  
COMMITTEE ON FEBRUARY 10, 2016**

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***H.B. No. 5044 - An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Ending  
June 30, 2017.***

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Co-Chairs, Ranking Members, and members of the Committee, I was the Director of Career and Education Initiatives at Central Area Health Education Center, Inc (Central AHEC) for three years before eventually moving on to a position at the University of Connecticut. During my time at Central AHEC, I worked with the staff there to design and implement programs that helped thousands of underserved high school and college students prepare for careers in healthcare. Even working at UConn now, I have seen evidence of the success of the programs put on by the CT AHECs. A few weeks ago, in fact, I met a UConn student in the hall of my building who had been in one of Central AHEC's summer programs. She was waiting to speak to UConn's Pre-med advisor. In the brief conversation I had with her, she told me how close she was to achieving her dream of going to medical school and how valuable her experience with the CT AHEC's had been.

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](http://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 cannot express the consequences and unreplaceable void this would leave for the state of Connecticut. I know 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.

Sincerely,  
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