

**TESTIMONY OF MARILIAN REYES 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 currently attend Western CT State University (WCSU) where I am a Collegiate Health Service Corps participant with Northwestern Area Health Education Center (AHEC), Inc. AHEC is an amazing organization that allows undergraduates to build connections in the community, grow as leaders, and find ways to provide useful and important information involving health in areas where not many people have access. I have been involved with CHSC for about 3 years now and I have absolutely loved it. I think what we do benefits those in underserved populations, as well as the students. Being able to educate and help our community through volunteering and service-learning projects has helped me better understand different health and public health topics. AHEC is an important part of our community because of the active difference its programs make in our community - at the college population level and also the city population level. The CHSC program at WCSU has grown so much through the years - we've been involved in multiple projects and are starting new projects this semester, from a film screening, hunger banquets, being a part of the committee for "Homeless Connect", participating in the Connecticut Brain Freeze, and the possibility of working with inmates this semester. I am a resident of Danbury.

The CT AHEC 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 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, the primary care workforce must expand and respond to meet those changes: the CT AHEC Network is an invaluable resource 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).

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.

I have been fortunate to be part of this program which allowed me to further my life and educational experiences. I cannot express the consequences and unreplaceable void this would leave for the state of Connecticut. I personally feel 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.

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