



Testimony of

Joanne Borduas
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Community Health and Wellness Center of Greater Torrington

*Regarding the Human Services Provisions
of Governor Malloy's Budget Proposal*
Appropriations Committee

February 11, 2016

Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the Human Services provisions of Governor Malloy's budget proposal, which will impact hundreds of thousands of Connecticut residents.

On behalf of Community Health and Wellness Center, which serves 8,000 patients each year, equating to over 30,000 visits, I offer comments on the following:

Block Granting of State Agencies: I strongly oppose the governor's proposal to block grant certain funding streams to state agencies, which would shift the responsibility of appropriating taxpayer money from the legislative branch to the executive branch. As this Committee knows, the legislature has direct accountability to its constituents, and hearings like these are a testament to the importance of public input in crafting state budgets. Please do not accept this proposal, and instead, allow the legislature to retain the responsibility of creating the state budget.

Reduction in funding to FQHCs: The State of Connecticut has been supportive of federally-qualified health centers (FQHCs), which, altogether, provide over 350,000 state residents with high-quality primary, dental and behavioral health care. In prior years, this financial support has come in the form of state grants from the Department of Public Health (DPH). Last year, the legislature shifted most of those funds to the Department of Social Services (DSS), in order to receive a federal match.

Unfortunately, Governor Malloy now proposes to reduce those DSS funds by half. By removing \$775,000 from the state budget, the pot of funds for FQHCs will be reduced from \$4 million to \$2 million. I ask you to reject this cut, which leaves federal money on the table and will hurt Connecticut residents.

These funds supplement patient revenue and federal grants, to help FQHCs continue to provide a full range of health care services to all people – regardless of ability to pay. A cut in funds will have real impact: As the only FQHC in the rural northwestern part of the state, we provide services for medical, dental and behavioral health to a primarily low income population. Sixty six per cent of our patient population is at less than 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), with another 20% below 200% of the FPL. In the past year we have increased the number of patients below 200% of the FPL by 13% from 4,829 in 2013 to 6,091. Of the number of patients we see 59% are on Medicaid and 15% are uninsured. Our patient base has grown since 2009 to present from 2,727 to 8,024 an increase of 194%. Patient Visits grew from 10,211 to 33,750 an increase of 231%. Without funding, we will likely have to limit hours of service in order to reduce staffing, causing limited access to care and even larger gaps for those patients who have been lost to care. Appointment wait times will increase and we will likely need to increase the number of referrals out of the center for needed services, which presents a large challenge for our patient population who is insured with Medicaid or uninsured. If patients are unable to access services, they will utilize the local Emergency Department and Walk-in Clinics to meet their primary health care needs, and compliance to their plan of care will fall. Staff will be forced to take on more roles and providers will need to see more patients when they are here in order to make up for decreased hours, causing burnout and turnover in a difficult to recruit area. Vital programs such as Nutrition counseling may need to be cut, contributing to the growing problem of obesity and cardiac risk factors. Staff offering valuable enabling services, which deal with social determinants that often times contribute to poor health outcomes, will likely need to be reduced.

I do want to applaud the governor for not recommending changes to eligibility or services in the HUSKY program. That program, which serves over 725,000 Connecticut residents, has demonstrated level – and, in some cases, declining – per member-per month costs, bucking national health trends. After lowering income limits this past summer, I urge the Committee to agree with the governor’s proposal to allow HUSKY to continue on its successful path.

Thank you for your consideration and your hard work on behalf of Connecticut residents.

Regards,

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Torrington, CT 06790

What CHWC Torrington Dental means to me:

They help me out with my teeth and everyone is
so kind. I love coming here.

Name: Betty Riopp

Signature: Betty Riopp

Date: 2-10-16

What CHWC Torrington Dental means to me:

WITHOUT THE ^{CENTERS} ~~WENTERS~~ SUBURB SCALE I WOULD
BE WITHOUT ANY MEANS TO GET MY DENTAL NEEDS
ADDRESSED.

Name: GEORGE ALAIMS

Signature: George Alaims

Date: 2/10/16

What CHWC Torrington Dental means to me:

AFFORDABLE DENTAL CARE BY PROFESSIONALS THAT
ARE JUDGEMENT FREE & CARE.

Name: ROBERTA CZEKLENDZ

Signature: 

Date: 2/10/16

What CHWC Torrington Dental means to me:

Affordable Dental care. I am
a senior 81 yrs old and grateful
for CHWC being here in Torrington

Name: Jean Finkelstein

Signature: Jean Finkelstein Date: 2/9/16