

**TESTIMONY OF
Matthew Cassavechia
Western CT Health Network
(Danbury, New Milford and Norwalk Hospitals)
SUBMITTED TO THE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
Tuesday, March 8, 2016**

HB 5588, An Act Concerning The Timing of Payments From Supplemental Inpatient Payment Pools For Short-Term General Hospitals

WCHN* appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony concerning **HB 5588, An Act Concerning The Timing of Payments From Supplemental Inpatient Payment Pools For Short-Term General Hospitals.*

On March 2, hospitals received notice that Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management Benjamin Barnes ordered the Department of Social Services (DSS) to "hold on making any additional supplemental payments through either the inpatient supplemental pool or the small hospital pool." In addition, Secretary Barnes stated that he was "not optimistic that we will be able to move forward with any further state payments this fiscal year." This amounts to \$10 million dollars in new penalty to our organization for a total of \$55 million in taxes and cuts this year.

HB 5588 would require DSS make timely and adequate payments to hospitals from supplemental inpatient payment pools and to require that the money in the payment pools not be used for any other purpose.

Our hospitals provide core healthcare services to people in Connecticut, 24 hours a day, regardless of their ability to pay. We offer safe, accessible, affordable, patient-centered care that saves and improves peoples' lives.

As the Director of Emergency Services at WCHN, I am on call each day and night serving the emergent needs of our community. As I respond to a 911 call, I witness the many needs first-hand as I tend to COPD, stroke or heart attack patients or simply the homeless looking for warmth and care on a frigid night.

I can tell you the healthcare needs are growing, not subsiding. With an aging population, we see seniors with uncontrolled diabetes, our large undocumented population with unchecked health issues and our chronically mentally ill cycling in, and out, of our emergency departments as they try desperately to manage their day-to-day life by masking their mental health issues with substance use and abuse. We serve them all with dignity and respect.

In the most frustrating way, these cuts and taxes make our job much harder than it should be as we try to provide high quality care with substantially reduced resources. While we would like to be implementing new preventive and population health models, instead, our precious funds are being diverted to the general fund and our precious patients suffer as a result.

That's money we would have invested in developing primary care homes and Community Care Teams, placing clinical navigators, promoting Diabetes maintenance, offering community screenings and checking in on our seniors and Veteran's. Instead, our organization is forced close programs, limit service hours, and cut-back on screenings and outreach driving patients to the brink of urgency and to the most expensive point of care-the emergency department.

We understand the state is facing a challenging budget, but we cannot solve this on the backs of the most vulnerable people that we are both tasked serving. I urge you to please support HB 5588. Thank you for your public service, your time and your consideration of our position.