



RADIOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF CONNECTICUT, INC.
A CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF RADIOLOGY

Statement of Thomas Farquhar, M.D.
Appropriations Committee

February 11, 2016

Sen. Bye, Rep. Walker, Senator Kane, Rep. Ziobron and members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Thomas Farquhar. I am a medical doctor practicing radiology in Hartford with Jefferson Radiology. I am also legislative co-chair of the Radiological Society of Connecticut, and I would like to offer brief comments on the proposed budget of the Department of Social Services.

This proposed budget continues the drastic payment reductions made last year to the provider component of Medicaid payments for imaging such MRI, CT Scan, X-Ray and Mammography.

The cut was about 42 percent and is reflected again in the budget adjustment for fiscal 2017. We are asking that you reconsider this budget item because we are very worried this will limit Medicaid patient access these vital services.

To be clear, these cuts target only private practice radiologists. The cut did not affect hospitals or hospital-employed physicians. These private practices are small businesses, employing hundreds of employees with good paying jobs in communities across the state.

DSS has said publicly that these rates are in line with neighboring states in New England. This is not true; these rates are lower than Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine. We did not have access to easily compare Rhode Island. These rates put Connecticut Medicaid payments among the lowest in the country, on par with only a few states, such as Mississippi.

The reimbursement rates for mammography, a basic preventative screening study, are particularly out of line. The CT Medicaid rates is less than 2/3 of the rates in neighboring New York and Massachusetts, this while CT has recently been announced to now have the #1 highest breast cancer incidence in the country.

The eventual outcome of continued provider cuts is very clear: Medicaid patients will have few if any non-hospital providers accepting their insurance, driving them to hospitals even for routine, outpatient and screening exams, and at greater cost and much less convenience.

We have already seen a private practice in Meriden announce it is no longer accepting new Medicaid patients. In July of 2015, one of 2 private practice offices in the city of Hartford closed, leaving only hospitals and a single private practice as patient options.

Again, we ask for your help in partially restoring the cuts to radiology provider reimbursement. Cuts to other providers, even hospitals, were restored or partially restored with the budget last summer, and we ask that you take steps to preserve patient access and address these radiology cuts this session.