



# Community Health Center Association of Connecticut

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Testimony of

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

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

On behalf of the Community Health Center Association of Connecticut (CHCACT), and its fifteen member federally-qualified health centers, I offer comments on the following:

***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 services. As you can see from the list at the bottom of this testimony, FQHCs provide care all across the state, in urban, rural and suburban areas. All of you on this Committee have health center patients in your districts.

Our state has been supportive of federally-qualified health centers through public policy and through state grants from the Department of Public Health (DPH) (specifically, the Community Health Services line item), in recognition of the large number of uninsured and underinsured patients seen by health centers. These grants supported clinician salaries, administrative and other costs associated with providing high-quality comprehensive health care services. Last year, the legislature shifted most of those funds to the Department of Social Services (DSS), in order to receive a federal match. However, \$422,327 was retained at DPH, to be distributed as grants.

To date, in Fiscal Year '16, these grant funds have not been distributed.

Now, the governor's budget proposal removes that funding for FY '17. Some might argue that the Affordable Care Act, which has increased the number of insured people in our state, eliminates the need for this grant. However, health centers continue to see uninsured patients – in 2014, 18.5% of health center patients were uninsured – because they are some of the only providers who will. Additionally, many of the plans sold on Access Health CT come with large

deductibles, some as high as \$6,000. Individuals seeking health care services before they have hit their deductible are often unable to pay full cost out-of-pocket; at health centers, they are offered payment on a sliding fee scale. These grants are needed to fill in the gaps left by underpayments through both Medicaid and the sliding fee scale.

The loss of this grant funding will be one more cut that will reduce the ability of health centers to maintain their full array of services. The real impact of this cut will be a reduction in clinician or support staff hours, leading to decreased access to health care. I urge you to reject this proposal.

***Reduction in Funding to School-Based Health Centers:*** CHCACT opposes the governor's proposed cut to school-based health centers, which are critical providers of medical, behavioral and oral health care in school settings. In Connecticut, most FQHCs also operate School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs), which are proven to keep students healthier and better learners.

In 2015, through budget reductions and rescissions, state support of school-based health centers was reduced by over \$1 million, approximately an 8% cut. Governor Malloy now proposes to reduce funding yet again by another \$1.24 million.

School-based health centers represent a success in our state. Research supports their effectiveness in providing health care, specifically mental health care: students who use SBHC services are 74% more likely to receive the mental health care they need than students who do not. Reducing support to school-based health centers would be a backwards step for our state, in trying to improve access to health care for children.

***Block Granting of State Agencies:*** CHCACT continues to strongly oppose the governor's proposal to block grant certain funding streams to state agencies, which would shift some of 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.

Thank you for your consideration and your hard work on behalf of our great state.