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Testimony in Support of:
HB 5168: AN ACT CONCERNING MANDATE RELIEF FOR HOSPITALS,
Public Health Committee
February 17, 2016

Good Morning Chairman Steinberg, Co-chair Gerratana, Co-chair Somers, Vice-chair Kennedy, Vice-chair Logan, Vice-chair Luxenberg, Ranking Member Srinivasan, and members for the Public Health Committee. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify in favor of 5168: An Act Concerning Mandate Relief for Hospitals.

The goal of this legislation is to provide the opportunity for community hospitals to get relief from unnecessary state unfunded mandates which have been an ongoing financial challenge to them.

While we are faced with resolving the current budget deficit of \$3 billion dollars for the next two years, our community hospitals have once again been targeted for more cuts by the Governor's budget proposal. The current administration previously said that "Connecticut's hospitals need to reduce costs", but at the same time the Malloy administration has withheld for months hundreds of millions of dollars in state and federal payments that Connecticut's hospitals had been promised under the hospital provider tax agreement.

In my conversations with community hospitals I have learned the serious and harmful consequences the hospital provider tax has had on our community hospitals. Hospital executives have testified this unfair tax has forced them to make painful decisions including:

- Job layoffs
- Elimination of pensions
- Elimination of potential salary increases
- Reduction or elimination of services and programs

To offset the cash flow shortage created by the administration I respectfully suggest that we consider eliminating or suspending unnecessary unfunded state mandates that take away limited resources from our community hospitals.

By reducing a few unfunded state mandates hospitals will have money available to:

- Invest in their employees
- Invest in their services and programs
- Invest in their technology and quality medical care

Lastly, I want to reassure the public that in no way would this bill jeopardize the current quality of care our residents are accustomed to. My recommendation is that we allow our community hospitals to demonstrate which unfunded mandates are financially burdensome and then suspend or eliminate those mandates. Our community hospitals are essential to our local economy, jobs, and access to quality medical care. Therefore, I suggest we use this alternative approach to lessen the hardship to our community hospitals, so that our constituents can still rely them.

I would like to thank the committee for giving a public hearing to HB 5168, and ask the committee for favorable action.