

Connecticut General Assembly - Joint Committee on Public Health
Legislative Office Building, Hartford, CT 06106
February 9, 2017

Re: SB 126 - AN ACT CONCERNING COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS

Dear Members of the Committee on Public Health:

My name is Supriyo B. Chatterjee and I reside in West Hartford Connecticut and work in Healthcare Economics & Technology. For your consideration, I would like to submit my public comments in support of **SB 126 – AN ACT CONCERNING COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS**.

The Connecticut Medicaid program provides healthcare coverage to almost 750,000 individuals (20% of the population). The Medicaid expenditures represents about 14% of the state budget, and totals approximately \$6bn annually. With the recent changes in administration, the program may undergo fiscal changes via the use of “Block Grants”. This may put more financial pressures on the State’s Medicaid budget in the future. Using Community Health Workers in healthcare delivery is a cost-effective way for adding value, improving health outcomes and addressing health equity. As healthcare payments are moving from a fee-based service to a holistic value-based service – participation of Community Health Workers will be increasingly vital. An ACA 2013 rule change gave State Medicaid programs an option to pay Community Health Workers to provide prescribed preventive services.

Community Health Workers are trusted members of their community and share similar ethnicity, language and socioeconomic positions with other members. They can bridge the sociocultural gaps between members and local health and social service providers. They can be instrumental in mitigating mistrust that individuals may have of healthcare organizations. Addressing social and behavioral determinants of health can bring achievement in health outcomes at lesser costs.

In clinical settings, Community Health Workers can provide the non-medical necessities of care. Their participation in healthcare delivery can be meaningful - by encouraging tests and screening, medication management, transportation, and promoting a healthy living style. In a 2014 University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine intervention, Community Health Workers played a pivotal role in improving post hospital outcomes and reduction in readmission rates. In another study, there were Medicaid savings when Community Health Workers matched the needs of home and community care.

A recent book, *‘The American Health Care Paradox’*, showed how social services spending can play a significant determinant of health outcomes. But to coordinate and bridge the gap between social services and healthcare, are met with barriers and difficulties. To quote a doctor – “It is very tough to

follow up on someone who's living on a park bench". Deploying Community Health Workers can help bridge gaps, reduce costs and improvements in healthcare delivery.

I urge you to consider this important bill that will ensure healthier people in our state.

Thank you,

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