

Public Testimony – Public Health Committee
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Senate Bill 126
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Project Access of New Haven was founded in 2009 by a group of dedicated physicians who sought to address health concerns and inequities in the New Haven community. Since that time our dedicated board, staff and network of 400 volunteer physicians have worked collaboratively to fulfill our mission of increasing access to medical care and services for the underserved in the Greater New Haven area. The Project Access model of care coordination engages the local community to build a network of care for the underserved. All services received are donated and free of charge to the patients enrolled.

At the heart of what we do in Patient Navigation. The bi-lingual patient navigation staff, also referred to as Community Health Workers, work very closely with patients to provide high touch care coordination designed to remove access barriers and help patients navigate the healthcare system. Our Community Health Workers's eliminate barriers to care (e.g., by coordinating translation or transportation services), follow up with patients and providers after appointments to ensure follow-through with physician recommendations (e.g., by assisting with medication access or scheduling follow-up tests and treatments), and provide referrals to community resources to address other issues or concerns such as food insecurity, housing, legal concerns and resources for financial supports. During a given month Project Access New Haven Community Health Workers's provide on average 6 navigation activities on behalf of the patients enrolled. As a result of our intensive navigation services and supports, our patients have shorter wait times (13 days on average) and lower no-show rates for medical appointments of just 3%. We strongly believe that our high show-rate of 97% for medical appointments is an indication that these efforts are successful in removing barriers so that patients can prioritize their health, get to their appointments, and obtain needed care. Since opening our doors to our first patient in 2010 we have navigated the care for more than 1,300 patients with urgent needs ranging from x-rays to cancer care. The value of the donated care to our patients from providers and community partners is more than \$30 million.

Project Access is 100% grant funded. On an annual basis I must raise funds to sustain this highly needed program. Our data and data from across the United States and abroad shows that culturally competent, trusted community members in the role of CHW's not only improve health outcomes but also plays a vital and necessary role in addressing social barriers that many individuals, in particular low income individuals, face that would otherwise prevent them from completing necessary medical treatments.

I recognize that Project Access of New Haven is not the only community based organization that provides these much needed services across the State of Connecticut. Given limited resources

for these services, we frequently work collaboratively to ensure that our patients and clients have favorable outcomes. I stand in support of my colleagues today as I highly advocate for the State of Connecticut to define, fully recognize and integrate Community Health Workers into the fabric of care delivery across the State of Connecticut complete with a sustainable payment/reimbursement model for this cost saving and life-saving work that is so vital and necessary for all residents of the State.

Thank you.