

**Testimony of Lauren Rosato, Director Strategic Health Care Initiatives
for Planned Parenthood of Southern New England
on Senate Bill 126, AAC Community Health Workers.
Public Health Committee meeting of Friday, February 10, 2017**

Good Morning Representatives Moore, Abercrombie and Markley, and members of the Human Services Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today on Proposed Senate Bill 126.

My name is Lauren Rosato and I work for Planned Parenthood of Southern New England. I'm also a member of the Community Health Worker Committee of the CT SIM.

I am here to provide opinion on why defining the roles and responsibilities of Community Health Workers in Connecticut is important to our patients, young women and men ages 18-35.

Our patients often fall through the cracks of the rest of the medical system because they have "aged out" of their pediatrician's office. They continue to use the health system for sexual and reproductive health care but not necessarily for primary care. However, young people do suffer from chronic diseases such as asthma, depression, diabetes or hypothyroidism.

More often than not, our patients do not see a primary care provider because of lack of time, or lack of money, or lack of insurance. This results in young people who do not have essential medications when prescriptions expire, or who have poorly managed chronic conditions, or who experience persistent health disparities.

Planned Parenthood started offering primary care services to our patients to bridge this health disparity. We are participating in the Advanced Medical Home Vanguard program of the CT SIM, and we are working toward Patient Centered Medical Home accreditation.

It is in this confluence of specialty care and primary care that we fully understand the need for Community Health Workers. As specialty care providers and community based organizations become partners in the work of "whole person care" - the basis of Accountable Care that is changing the health system from fee-for-service to value-based care - the need for Community Health Workers will increase. Planned Parenthood is an example of this.

Today we have a landscape of care coordinators: patient navigators, community health workers, enrollment specialists, social workers, nurse case managers, disease specific care managers, medical interpreters, health educators.

What's unique about Community Health Workers is that they are trusted members of, and/or have a unique and intimate understanding of the communities they serve. They help all of the other care coordinator roles because they enhance access to community-based services and they address social determinants of health.

Planned Parenthood encourages Connecticut to move forward with a definition of the roles and responsibilities and towards certification of Community Health Workers, to promote and formalize this role within our health care system. This will bring clarity to the scope of practice boundaries, increase respect for the role within the community, increase career opportunities, simplify recruitment and selection, and provide rationale for integration of CHWs into health care teams.

Thank you.