



UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE  
FOUNDATION OF CONNECTICUT

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## **Testimony in Support of House Bill 5463**

### **An Act Concerning a Medicaid Public Option**

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**March 13, 2018**

Chairs and members of the Human Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 5463: An Act Concerning a Medicaid Public Option.

Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut envisions a state where everyone has access to quality, affordable health care. We recently drafted principles for universal health care to further define that vision:

- **Universal:** Access to coverage and care when and where you need it, leaving no one out
- **Continuous:** No gaps in coverage throughout your life
- **Affordable:** For all income levels
- **Sustainable:** For the economy
- **Healthy Outcomes:** High quality, safe, comprehensive, and equitable care that promotes health

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) laid an important foundation for realizing these principles, but, for many reasons, that foundation is crumbling.

- The ACA relies on competition among health plans to hold down premium costs, but only two health plans currently participate in the exchange's individual market and those two plans may not choose to continue in the future
- Legislative and regulatory sabotage of the law from Washington is undermining the law, causing premiums and out-of-pocket cost sharing to rise and destabilizing the insurance market
- With a small pool of just over 100,000 enrollees, Access Health CT has little bargaining power to encourage plans to remain in the exchange, hold down costs or require innovative programs that have a positive impact on health care quality

In contrast, Connecticut's Medicaid program serves over 800,000 Connecticut residents and has a track record of holding costs down and promoting quality care through patient centered medical homes and enhanced care management.

The idea of establishing a public option in Connecticut is not new. In 2009, Connecticut passed [PA 09-148](#), to create the SustiNet plan, a public option that would be anchored in both Medicaid and the State Employee Health Plan. The SustiNet Health Partnership Board, co-chaired by Lt. Gov. Nancy Wyman and Comptroller Kevin Lembo, began meeting in September 2009 to plan implementation of SustiNet. Five advisory committees and three task forces were convened and more than 160 Connecticut residents participated in the planning process. A [final report](#) was submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly in January 2011.

Other states are considering establishing a public option based on the Medicaid program. Among them are New Mexico, which passed a bill to study a Medicaid buy-in option, and Colorado, where a bill is expected to be introduced soon.

HB 5463 proposes that the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services, in consultation with the Office of Health Strategy and the Health Care Cabinet, conduct a study and submit a report to the Connecticut General Assembly on how a Medicaid public option, Husky E, could be implemented in the state. It suggests a timeline for the study to be completed and for a waiver request to be submitted to the federal government. It also requires that steps be taken to “ensure the HUSKY E plan does not diminish the long-term sustainability of or negatively impact the Medicaid program.” The Foundation supports this crucial provision of the bill. We also would like to see language that ensures robust consumer participation in the study.

Universal Health Care Foundation has testified this session in support of bills that help to stabilize the current health insurance marketplace. We firmly believe it is time to consider the bolder approach suggested in HB 5463. We urge passage of this bill, to move Connecticut closer to the goal of universal, affordable, quality health coverage and care.

*Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut's mission is to serve as a catalyst that engages residents and communities in shaping a democratic health system that provides universal access to quality, affordable health care and promotes health in Connecticut. We believe that health care is a fundamental right and that our work is part of a broader movement for social and economic justice.*