

February 19, 2019

Connecticut General Assembly, Aging Committee  
State Capitol Building, Room 011  
Hartford, CT 06106

**Testimony of the American Lung Association in Connecticut in Support of HB7101, An Act Concerning Flu Shots for Senior Citizens Prior to Hospital Discharge.**

Dear Distinguished Chairpersons and Members of the Aging Committee:

My name is Ruth Canovi. I am the Director of Advocacy in Connecticut for the American Lung Association - a not-for-profit public health association working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease. Thank you for the opportunity to support House Bill 7101, An Act Concerning Flu Shots for Senior Citizens Prior to Hospital Discharge.

This bill would require hospitals to offer flu vaccines to all inpatient individuals aged sixty-five years or older unless the person has a condition that would not allow such vaccination. Influenza, or flu, is a contagious disease caused by a virus. Its symptoms can affect many parts of the body, including the lungs. For healthy children and adults, the flu is often a moderately severe illness. Most people are back on their feet within a week. But the flu can be severe and even fatal for "high-risk" individuals. People at high-risk for the flu include those who are not healthy or well to begin with including individuals with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), asthma, other chronic conditions, older people and young children. The flu is more dangerous for these people because it can lead to serious complications (additional diseases or conditions). Most of these complications are bacterial infections. This is because the body can be so weakened by the flu, its defenses against bacteria are low.

The best defense of preventing the flu is getting the flu vaccine. The flu vaccine is proven to: reduce the risk of getting the flu; can make the flu less severe if someone does get sick; and can be lifesaving. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggests that everyone six months of age or older should get vaccinated and this is especially advised for those who are categorized as "high-risk".

**Northeast Region**

45 Ash Street | East Hartford, CT 06108  
Ph: 800-499-LUNG | Info@LungNE.org

**1-800-LUNGUSA | Lung.org**

There have been 25 flu-associated deaths reported in Connecticut during this 2018-2019 flu season. Of those 25 flu-associated deaths, 15 occurred in persons older than 65 years of age, 9 in persons 50-64 years of age and 1 in a person 25-49.<sup>1</sup> An influenza-associated death is defined, for surveillance purposes as a death resulting from a clinical compatible illness that was confirmed to be influenza by an appropriate laboratory or rapid diagnostic test.

The American Lung Association in Connecticut supports protecting our most vulnerable Connecticut residents from the serious risks associated with influenza and consequently, supports hospitals offering flu vaccinations to all inpatient individuals aged sixty-five years and older.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this important issue.

Ruth Canovi, MPH  
Director, Advocacy  
American Lung Association, Connecticut

---

<sup>1</sup> Influenza Update. Connecticut Department of Public Health – Posted 2/14/2019. 2018-2019 Influenza Season Update for Week 6 (The week ending on Saturday February 9, 2019). [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Departments-and-Agencies/DPH/dph/infectious\\_diseases/flu/stats/thisweeksfluupdate.pdf?la=en](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Departments-and-Agencies/DPH/dph/infectious_diseases/flu/stats/thisweeksfluupdate.pdf?la=en)

