



TESTIMONY OF BONNIE ROSWIG, ESQ.
CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY
HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING
FEBRUARY 28, 2019

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In support of:

HB 7166: AN ACT CONCERNING NONEMERGENCY MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION FOR MEDICAID BENEFICIARIES

HB 7123 AN ACT CONCERNING TELEPHONE WAIT TIMES FOR PERSONS CONTACTING THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (with changes)

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee

Good afternoon. My name is Bonnie Roswig and I am an attorney with the Center for Children's Advocacy. The Center for Children's Advocacy is the largest children's legal rights organization in New England providing legal representation and advocacy for the poorest, most at risk child and youth in Connecticut.

Connecticut is in dire need of this legislation to impact the functionality of the Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) program.

Veyo continues to violate the NEMT contract and the federal mandate. Patients are denied requisite modes of transportation, medical documentation from health care providers is ignored by Veyo staff and patients are cut off from transportation without notice in violation of federal law.

Actual transportation to medical appointments continues to be problematic – patients are not getting to dialysis appointments, children are not getting to intensive out-patient mental health programs, patients with specialty transportation needs such as wheel chairs are not getting transportation service and patients are waiting hours for scheduled rides.

Health care providers are also dramatically impacted by the failures of Veyo. Patients do not get to critical appointments and health care professionals spend precious clinical time calling Veyo and faxing and re-faxing documentation of patient medical transportation requirements. Multiple hospitals have reported patients waiting for hours for transportation and ultimately the facility – or the employee staff – provide funds to get the patient home.

Fighting for the legal rights of Connecticut's most vulnerable children

Connecticut's current capitated contract with Veyo has not resulted in higher quality transportation but rather in widespread denial of transportation. Under this \$160 million dollar capitated contract, Veyo is not only advanced monies for administrative costs but is pre-paid for transportation for every Medicaid recipient. Therefore, every time a ride is denied to a Medicaid recipient Veyo keeps the money. Denial of transportation does not result in a savings to the state – it only results in a profit to Veyo.

Veyo practices have also drastically impacted by the available pool of transportation providers. Under Veyo, companies who had been doing NEMT transportation for decades were falsely accused of refusing rides that in reality had not been assigned to them, suspended for not taking assignments that were in fact out of their geographic area and sanctioned for being late to rides that were assigned by Veyo at the last minute.

In a state that is looking to expand commerce, the actions of Veyo have resulted in transportation companies laying off staff, selling vehicles and closing their doors. The diminished capacity of the transportation pool clearly impacts the availability of transportation to Medicaid recipients.

For the transportation providers that do remain, Veyo has consistently failed to provide payment in a timely manner. Even though Veyo email professes to pay on a weekly basis, the payments do not arrive. As of mid-February, payments to transportation providers were behind by four weeks. Excuses from Veyo include statements such as 'due to the failure of consumers to pay us we cannot pay you' and "Due to unforeseen circumstances we will not be able to pay". The state of Connecticut is Veyo's only "consumer". There can be no unforeseen circumstances since the state professes to pay Veyo in a timely fashion.

Veyo appears to have preferred transportation providers. First, there appears to be a preference for Uber like or independent drivers. These drivers do not have the skill, training, availability or diversity of vehicles as traditional transportation providers but they do accept a lower reimbursement rate resulting in higher profits to Veyo. The other preferred transportation provider is a company who Veyo assigns over 30,000 rides per month – multiple times more than any other transportation company. It should be noted that it was reported by the Office of the U.S. Attorney that the owner of this company plead guilty to a federal tax crime on February 25, 2019.

Vigilant oversight of the NEMT contract is the responsibility of the Department of Social Services. Connecticut has committed to a robust NEMT program in their State Plan with the federal Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services. Stronger contractual terms and rights of Medicaid recipients need to be enacted. However, without appropriate commitment to oversight of the program, patients will continue to suffer, Connecticut companies will be put out of business and federal funds will be put at risk.

In regard to HB 7123 limitations must be placed on the amount of time that DSS recipients have to wait to access assistance from a staff person. The benefits that are controlled by DSS are fundamental – food, medical and minimal cash assistance. The lack of these benefits causes crisis in our most vulnerable families and the need to access relief is immediate. Families who find themselves with no benefits have

virtually no alternatives – if a monthly financial benefit has been terminated, families do not have money for gas to get to a DSS office. If a family has to wait on the call center line for an hour, their limited phone minutes run out quickly and there are no funds to replenish the service. As my colleagues from legal services and the Connecticut Legal Rights Project, Inc. have recommended, a wait time of ten minutes with funding for requisite DSS staffing levels would be the appropriate modification to this bill.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today. I am happy to address any questions that you may have.

Respectfully Submitted,

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