

TESTIMONY OF TOM SWAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE CONNECTICUT CITIZEN ACTION GROUP (CCAG)
MARCH 7, 2019
BEFORE THE INSURANCE AND REAL ESTATE COMMITTEE
IN SUPPORT OF
H.B. 7267 AN ACT CONCERNING PUBLIC OPTIONS FOR HEALTH CARE IN CONNECTICUT
S.B. 134 AN ACT OPENING THE STATE EMPLOYEE HEALTH PLAN TO SMALL BUSINESS EMPLOYEES

Senator Lesser, Representative Scanlon and other members of the Committee my name is Tom Swan and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Citizen Action Group. On behalf of our thousands of members statewide I want to thank you for holding today's hearing. I will be commenting on two bills today, but first I would like to commend Comptroller Lembo and Senator Cohen for their leadership on this issue.

CCAG applauds your raising of H.B. No. 7267 AN ACT CONCERNING PUBLIC OPTIONS FOR HEALTH CARE IN CONNECTICUT and urge its passage. Connecticut's small businesses deserve to be able to take advantage of the state's ability control costs and cutting-edge prevention focused plan design. Small businesses are and will continue to be the driving force behind Connecticut's economy. This bill puts the legislature clearly on the side of small businesses in a way that really matters to small employers, their families and their workers.

There is no one who can argue the current state of the health insurance market is working for this group and the trajectory is only going to get worse. Small businesses hate high deductible plans just like the rest of us. They were pushed as a means to keep health care costs down, but really have only served to enrich insurance companies, increased out of pocket costs faster than peoples' pay has increased, have patients avoid necessary care and turn Doctor's offices into collection agencies. Small employers want health insurance that is stable and that is there when they, their family and employees need care.

Furthermore, it does not make sense from a business or a from an economic development perspective to ask small to have to dedicate time and resources to navigating the evolving health care system. In Connecticut two hospital systems have near monopoly control of hospital beds and are buying up doctor practices at an alarming rate. Nationally, we are seeing merger and acquisitions taking place that are resulting in vertically integrated health care conglomerates that no one has figured out how to regulate let alone asking small businesses to navigate successfully.

It should be clear to all of us that Connecticut's small business environment would improve greatly from passage of this legislation.

We also support the other the other portions of this legislation that create a public option for individuals in phase two and create aa planning process to consider larger changes in hope of a less corrupt administration nationally in 2021. It is clear that the health options for people (over 400% of poverty and immigrants) ineligible for subsidies on the exchange are inadequate and that it not only makes

sense to allow these individuals to benefit from the purchasing power of the state. This not only makes sense from a cost perspective, but also is the morally correct thing to do.

We also think that this is smart to begin a planning process based on the idea that there may be a less hostile administration in 2021 in Washington. It is smart to be prepared. We would recommend that your final language explicitly state that any waiver hold Medicaid enrollees harmless and that the make up of the study group adequately include consumer advocates, provider and enrollees.

We want to thank Sen. Cohen for introducing S.B. No. 134 AN ACT OPENING THE STATE EMPLOYEE HEALTH PLAN TO SMALL BUSINESS EMPLOYEES. Senator Cohen's story and leadership is a big reason we are optimistic that we will enact a public option this year.

Thank you for your consideration.