



Office of the
Healthcare
Advocate
STATE OF CONNECTICUT

Testimony of Ted Doolittle
Office of the Healthcare Advocate
Before the Insurance and Real Estate Committee
Re SB 322
February 14, 2019

Good morning, Senator Lesser, Representative Scanlon, Senator Kelly, Representative Pavalock-D'Amato, and members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee. For the record, I am Ted Doolittle, Healthcare Advocate for the State of Connecticut. The Office of the Healthcare Advocate ("OHA") is an independent state agency with a consumer-focused mission: assuring consumers have access to medically necessary healthcare; educating consumers about their rights and responsibilities under health plans; assisting consumers in disputes with their health insurance carriers; and informing legislators and regulators regarding problems that consumers are facing in accessing care, and proposing solutions to those problems.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment in opposition to SB 322, An Act Concerning the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Health Insurance Exchange. Please note that I have familiarity with this subject since I serve as an *ex officio* voting member of the Exchange board of directors.

The statute controlling the Exchange, C.G.S. § 38a-1081, includes several *ex officio* members, but also wisely includes provisions that certain appointed members have expertise in "individual health insurance," "small employer health insurance," "health care finance," "health care benefits plan administration," "health care delivery systems," "healthcare economics," "health care access issues faced by self-employed individuals," and "barriers to individual health care coverage." These expertise-oriented members, all of

whom are appointed by elected officials, serve terms of two to four years, so they are already subject to frequent re-appointment review, and thus already are subject to replacement at the discretion of elected officials.

Many current appointed board members have valuable experience with the early days of the Exchange and the ACA, and forcing such expertise-laden members to resign based on term limits would leave the board shorthanded – and the residents of Connecticut who rely on the Exchange shortchanged – at a time when the next few years promise to contain many more crucial developments in the healthcare and health insurance fields nationally and in Connecticut.

In addition, to the extent that the intent of the bill is to insure that insurance expertise and the viewpoint of the industry is represented, it should be noted that in addition to the several health insurance experts already required to be on the board, the Insurance Commissioner, who historically has been drawn from the ranks of industry, is an *ex officio* non-voting member whose counsel is frequently sought and carefully weighed by the board and senior management of the Exchange. In addition, representatives from the carriers participating on the Exchange sit directly on crucial advisory bodies such as the Health Plan Benefits and Qualifications Advisory Committee. A review of the minutes of the board and the afore-mentioned Advisory Committee over the years will leave no doubt as to the strong consideration that the Exchange and the Board already give to industry in all aspects of Exchange operations.

On the other hand, the viewpoint that could be beefed up is the viewpoint of the entity that is paying for the Exchange, paying every dime of revenue for all carriers on and off the Exchange, and paying every bit of premium that is collected both on and off the Exchange, and that is the Connecticut taxpayer and consumer – individuals and small businesses. The General Assembly would be wise to add several more board seats reserved for consumers, both individual and small employers of varying incomes and health conditions, who have current personal experience in buying insurance both on and off the exchange, from both the subsidized and non-subsidized populations.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this testimony. If you have any questions concerning our position on this issue, please feel free to contact me at Ted.Doolittle@ct.gov.