

TESTIMONY OF
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SB 46, An Act Prohibiting Hospitals From Charging Fees For Trauma Activation

Yale New Haven Hospital and Yale New Haven Children's Hospital appreciate this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **SB 46, An Act Prohibiting Hospitals From Charging Fees For Trauma Activation**. We **strongly** oppose this bill.

Both Yale New Haven Hospital and Yale New Haven Children's Hospital are independent level one trauma centers, two of the only 12 designated trauma centers in the state of Connecticut. Our pediatric level one trauma center is one of only two centers in the state to specialize in the care of traumatically injured children. As trauma centers, we treat all injured patients, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, regardless of their ability to pay. This care is beyond the routine treatment provided in emergency departments. Trauma, by its very nature, is unpredictable both in its timing and in types of severity of injuries suffered by patients.

On an annual basis, our dedicated trauma team treats patients with severe and life threatening injuries. A level one trauma center is the highest trauma level attainable, meaning that we provide care for any type and severity of injury.

Last year alone, the adult trauma program at Yale New Haven Hospital saw over 3900 patients. Our pediatric level one trauma center saw approximately 500 injured children last year. As safety net hospitals, we also accept trauma patients from other facilities across the state when their patients require a higher level of care for their injuries.

SB 46 would prohibit hospitals from charging a fee for trauma activation. It should be known that only facilities designated as a trauma center by the American College of Surgeons (ACS) can utilize a billing code for trauma activation, and we can only do so under certain circumstances. This fee helps to support our institutions' commitments to providing high quality and timely care. This resource ensures that staff is available and ready to provide emergent care for services such as X-rays, CT scans, and life-saving operations. Executing this care takes a team of highly trained professionals. Resources are required to ensure that we have the necessary equipment and devices that are specific to the care of the injured patient.

At *all* times, the trauma programs at Yale New Haven Hospital and Yale New Haven Children's Hospital must have the full range of emergency healthcare providers and services available above and beyond the services of the Emergency Department. Along with our trauma surgeons, we provide specialized care from the orthopedic surgeons, the neurosurgeons, vascular surgery, radiology, critical care, and rehabilitation medicine. These physician groups are supported by trauma trained nurses, emergency department and operating room technicians, physical therapists, spiritual care and social workers. We also have an obstetrical team that is available in the instance that a pregnant mom has been injured and has a baby in distress. Our pediatric team also includes a team that specializes in the care of the child exposed to abuse or neglect. Trauma centers are also dedicated to being prepared for mass casualty events which unfortunately, as current events including the Las Vegas shooting, can occur anywhere, anytime and without warning.

One trauma patient that presented to our center was a 50 year old man who sustained severe injuries to his leg, his internal organs as well as broken ribs and spine, as the result of being crushed under a vehicle. His care involved immediate evaluation by the trauma surgeon and the orthopedic surgeon, who took this patient to the operating room together to manage his critical injuries. He is alive today, and his family shared a heartfelt thank you for our "unparalleled and immediate care" as a "[level] one trauma center".

In addition, trauma centers must meet strict capital and training requirements as a condition of designation by the ACS. Each designated trauma center must undertake a rigorous designation process and re-designation process. Our program has a dedicated team that collects specific and detailed information about our injured patients that allow us to assess our performance and continue to maintain excellence. This is an intensive and highly collaborative process. Our data also serves to drive research in trauma care and guide the injury prevention team at our institutions.

Beyond the clinical care of the injured, trauma centers also provide resources to help patients rebuild their lives in the aftermath of the trauma. We also work with our communities to prevent or mitigate injuries. For example, just last week, thanks to collaboration with the New Haven Police Department, a police officer used lifesaving care in the use of a tourniquet to a young gunshot victim. Police officers have been trained and equipped with tourniquets through this collaboration.

Trauma activation fees support and provide the ability to offer essential trauma services to the residents and visitors of Connecticut. The use of a billing code for trauma services rendered is a means by which the trauma centers at Yale New Haven Hospital and Yale New Haven Children's Hospital can sustain our trauma designation and provide critical services to our communities.

The trauma fees that are applied to capture the activation of a trauma team can only be utilized when a trauma center receives pre-hospital notification from an EMS provider that an individual has sustained substantial and potentially life-threatening injuries (i.e., trauma fees cannot be charged for those who self-present at a trauma center, regardless of the severity of the injuries). These charges vary based on level of activation due to differences in team response, (e.g., full activation, partial activation, and trauma evaluations).

These charges comprise the expenses for each team member responding, as well as the equipment and resources that need to be ready at all times. Of the total number of trauma patients last year, 2000 adult trauma patients, and just over 240 pediatric patients were eligible to have this fee applied. The fees support the mission of the trauma centers at Yale New Haven Hospital and Yale New Haven Children's Hospital, and eliminating them would jeopardize our ability to provide critical care, which is literally a matter of life and death for our patients.

We urge you to oppose this bill and thank you for your consideration of our position.