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Testimony submitted by:

JoAnn Ryan

President & CEO

**Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce
Insurance & Real Estate Committee Public Hearing
Tuesday, February 9, 2021**

SB 842: AN ACT CONCERNING HEALTH INSURANCE AND HEALTH CARE IN CONNECTICUT

Members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the aforementioned legislation. My name is JoAnn Ryan and I am the President of the Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce (NWCC) and I write in **OPPOSITION** to this proposed bill.

The Chamber believes this legislation, which would levy a tax on health insurance by our members purchased through the state's existing insurance market, will increase health insurance costs. To offset these additional costs, small businesses would either have to absorb these costs or pass them directly onto their employees.

Given the COVID-19 pandemic's effect on the state of Connecticut's economy, the Chamber respectfully asks that a public option bill not be passed into law this session. Last year was such a fragile time for small businesses and we still do not know when our businesses will rebound.

Connecticut's leading experts on health insurance and Connecticut's own experienced health insurance companies have cautioned state officials of the concept of "pooling." Our state has seen the effects of this through the state's recently adopted Partnership Plan, which finished 2018 with a \$10M deficit. By the end of the following year that deficit tripled to \$30M. We fear what 2020's deficit may bring to taxpayers. If SB 842 is adopted, subsidies will be needed in the future and these will come directly from the pockets of the state's small employers and their employees.

Past legislative proposals did not provide whether participants or taxpayers would be responsible for funding the plan, thus leading to greater potential burdens for businesses already facing fiscal constraints following the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic.

NWCC is concerned that any public option proposal will create government competition with the private sector insurance options and could ultimately lead to government run healthcare, something our chamber members oppose.

NWCC welcomes the opportunity to work with this committee to make healthcare more affordable for our small business members and their employees. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

JoAnn Ryan
President & CEO

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