

**Testimony of Cathy Bartell
Administrator
Connecticut Surgery Center**

**Public Hearing of the State Tax Panel
September 16, 2016**

Good afternoon Chairmen Dyson and Nickerson and distinguished members of the panel. My name is Cathy Bartell and I am the Administrator of Connecticut Surgery Center, a three operating room center located in Hartford. I have been a Connecticut resident and healthcare executive for 25 years. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the recently imposed provider tax on ambulatory surgery centers, commonly known as ASCs

My center has 18 physician-owners and an additional 40 physicians who perform surgical care services in a community-based setting. I am very concerned about the new provider tax on ambulatory surgery centers especially in light of the fact that the new provider tax completely negates all that the legislature has set out to accomplish over the past decade.

Years back, I was honored to serve on Governor Rells' Healthcare Reform Advisory Board, which was charged with reviewing the impact of the proposed federal Health Insurance Exchange on the CT healthcare delivery system. The Health Insurance Exchange was developed to be a place where the uninsured could come to review plans, AFFORDABLE PLANS, and finally become insured.

Connecticut's exchange, Access Health CT, was launched in 2013, and Connecticut residents now have access to affordable health insurance options. But what happened to the promise of affordable healthcare options?

Part of what makes insurance plans affordable is the ability for consumers to select the highest quality and lowest cost providers in the market. ASCs in Connecticut provide exactly that. ASCs have the same or better quality indexes as hospitals and ASCs provide surgery care at HALF the cost. Yes, HALF the cost. That translates into direct savings to the patients we serve through lower deductibles, co-payments and co-insurance.

So why, when consumer-directed care is on the rise and people are seeking healthcare providers that will use the least amount of their savings, would the State of Connecticut suddenly start taxing ASCs? This is not a time to tax ASCs, this is a time to support ASC growth.

Now is also not the time to make ASCs less attractive to physicians or physician-owners. ASCs are growing and flourishing in other states. The doctors and highly skilled healthcare workers we need to enable us to provide healthcare services to an aging population have choices. They can stay in CT, where they will be taxed and live day-to-day with the risk of losing their jobs, or they can locate to states that provide an economic climate that allows for growth and opportunity and forgo imposing onerous provider taxes on healthcare services.

With the recently imposed provider tax, CT ASCs are placed at a competitive disadvantage and are significantly diminished. How can I attract healthcare providers from other states, invest in new equipment and keep pace with nursing pay rates when Connecticut is one of the few states that impose a provider tax on ASCs? The message Connecticut is sending to the ASC community is that the state is closed for business.

I respectfully request that the panel recommend to the legislature to repeal the ASC provider tax during the 2016 legislative session. Only a full repeal will ensure that all of the effort over the last decade to increase access to affordable healthcare in CT will be fully realized by every resident of our state.