



**Connecticut State Medical Society
Connecticut Chapter of the American College of Physicians
Connecticut Chapter of the American College of Surgeons
Testimony on Senate Bill 425 An Act Concerning a Basic Health Plan**

**Public Health Committee
March 21, 2012**

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee: on behalf of the more than 8,500 physicians and physicians in training of the Connecticut State Medical Society (CSMS) and the Connecticut Chapters of the American College of Surgeons and the American College of Physicians, thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony to you today on **Senate Bill 425 An Act Concerning a Basic Health Plan**.

We thank the leadership of this committee, as well as the Human Services Committee, for allowing us to be involved in the development process of this legislation. Our organizations support the concept and development of a Basic Health Plan to improve access to physician services and quality health care for many of this state's uninsured patients.

That said, we look forward to working with this committee to address issues related to physician participation, plan design and the structure of the provider reimbursement.

In order for the Basic Health Plan to be a viable option in this state, physicians need to participate as providers. Without an adequate physician network, patient access to care will be limited, deterring one of the fundamental goals of the Basic Health Plan. Active and strong physician participation in the program design, including the setting of reimbursement rates and the determination of payment incentives, is imperative to the success of this health plan.

As such, it is critical that actively practicing Connecticut physicians contribute their expertise to the development of a Basic Health Plan. Specifically, we would ask and recommend that the formation of the committee contemplated in section 1(d) of SB 425 include not only provider representatives, but specifically *physician* representatives in the fields of primary care, surgery and medical subspecialties. The inclusion of several physicians on this committee is critical when it comes to making recommendations regarding provider rates and payment incentives, both of which the committee is charged with. CSMS would recommend the inclusion on this committee of one physician representative appointed by CSMS, one privately practicing primary care physician, one privately practicing physician in a medical subspecialty and one privately practicing surgeon.

Also crucial to the success of this Basic Health Plan is choice – for both physicians and patients. Physicians must be allowed to voluntarily elect to participate in the Basic Health Plan, outside of participation in other state programs. In other words, physician network participation in the Basic Health Plan must be independent of other state health care programs. Patients must also be afforded choice in both their primary physician selection as well as specialty physicians. Patients should also be given the choice to utilize out-of-network physician services, if they elect

to do so. Our organizations support inclusion of both physician and patient choice into the language of this legislation.

Section 1(d) of SB 425 contemplates an increase in reimbursement rates to providers in the event of an excess of federal funding. In the event of such excess funding, we strongly believe that physicians, particularly those providing primary care services, should receive the benefit of this reimbursement increase. As CSMS has testified previously before this committee, Connecticut is facing physician shortages in primary care and many medical specialties. One stated goal of the Basic Health Plan is to increase access to primary care services as an alternative to emergency room care. Those physicians providing primary-care services are the logical beneficiaries of any potential reimbursement rate increases. Incentivizing their participation will go a long way to ensuring a viable primary care community of physician participants in the Basic Health Plan.

Working with the physician community, we believe that the Basic Health Plan will improve access to quality medical care in Connecticut for those that may not have such access today. As always, CSMS and its partner organizations are happy to provide support and assistance to the Committee in any way in the development of a new health care option in this state.