



**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 2015**

**HB 5448, An Act Requiring Health Care Providers To Be Vaccinated
Against Influenza**

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **HB 5448, An Act Requiring Health Care Providers To Be Vaccinated Against Influenza**. CHA supports HB 5448.

Before commenting on the bill, it's important to point out that Connecticut hospitals treat everyone who comes through their doors 24 hours a day, regardless of ability to pay.

This is a time of unprecedented change in healthcare, and Connecticut hospitals are leading the charge to transform the way care is provided. They are focused on providing safe, accessible, equitable, affordable, patient-centered care for all, and they are finding innovative solutions to integrate and coordinate care to better serve their patients and communities.

In November of 2011, the CHA Board of Trustees adopted a statewide policy endorsing mandatory influenza vaccinations for hospital personnel as part CHA hospitals' commitment to patient safety. The CHA Board took this action in concert with reports and positions of key national organizations that indicated more aggressive efforts to immunize hospital staff were necessary to keep patients safe and save lives.

The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America considers the influenza vaccination of healthcare personnel (HCP) to be "a core patient and HCP safety practice," and supports mandatory vaccination. Other organizations citing the need for mandatory vaccination programs for HCP include the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC), the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA), and the National Patient Safety Foundation (NPSF). The Joint Commission (TJC) standards require hospitals to offer vaccinations to licensed independent practitioners and staff, make vaccinations accessible, and provide education regarding influenza. In addition, TJC expects accredited hospitals (all CHA member hospitals are TJC-accredited) to evaluate and improve continuously vaccination rates toward the *Healthy People 2020* target goal of 90 percent.

In its recommendations, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicates that annual vaccination is the most important measure to take to prevent seasonal influenza infection, and that achieving high rates of immunization of HCP is critical. According to the CDC, research demonstrates that high vaccination levels of HCP are associated with reductions in the transmission of influenza, staff illness and absenteeism, and the risk of hospital-acquired influenza cases. Moreover, high rates of HCP vaccination are associated with reductions in flu-related illness and death.

By occupation, the CDC reports that during the 2013-2014 season, flu vaccination was highest among physicians (92%) and nurses (91%), followed by nurse practitioners/physician assistants (90%), other clinical personnel (87%), and pharmacists (86%). Coverage by occupation was lowest for assistants/aides (58%) and non-clinical personnel (69%). Non-clinical personnel include administrative support staff or managers, and non-clinical support staff (e.g., food service workers, housekeeping staff, maintenance staff, janitors, laundry workers, etc.).

While it is clear that vaccinating staff who may have direct contact with patients is an important step, many Connecticut hospitals have already elected to institute policies to vaccinate all personnel. This is because members of the hospital staff work together as a team, whether involved in patient contact or not, and such a strategy helps reduce the transmission of influenza and protect staff members and their families; it is also supported by statistics provided by the CDC.

For the 2013-2014 season, the CDC reported that vaccination coverage among HCP was at 75% overall but, notably, **coverage was highest among HCP working in settings with required flu vaccination requirements (98%) and the highest coverage by occupational setting was found to be in hospitals (90%)**. Flu vaccination coverage was higher among HCP whose employers required (89%) or recommended (70%) that they be vaccinated compared to those HCP who did not have an employer policy regarding flu vaccination (44%).

We applaud this legislation, as it supports action to protect patients and healthcare providers, and improves the health of communities.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.