



**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2016**

**SB 129, An Act Concerning Insurance Coverage For
Abuse-Deterrent Opioid Analgesics**

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **SB 129, An Act Concerning Insurance Coverage For Abuse-Deterrent Opioid Analgesics**. CHA supports the bill as one component of a comprehensive statewide strategy to reduce the misuse and abuse of opioids and other prescription drugs in Connecticut.

Before commenting on the bill, it's important to point out that Connecticut hospitals provide core healthcare services to all of the people in Connecticut, 24 hours a day, regardless of ability to pay. Connecticut hospitals offer safe, accessible, equitable, affordable, patient-centered care that protects and improves peoples' lives.

Opioids are narcotic drugs that reduce pain signals to the brain. Opioids and other types of controlled substances can be a safe and effective tool to manage pain, but they may be misused or abused by people seeking their euphoric effect. Opioid abuse can lead to addiction, chronic illness, or death.

Connecticut hospitals are already engaged in efforts to reduce inappropriate opioid use. The development in 2015 of voluntary opioid prescribing guidelines to help Emergency Department (ED) staff treat patients with chronic pain conditions is an example of such a solution. Formulated by hospital ED directors in collaboration with other prescribers, as well as the Department of Public Health, the guidelines are helping to reduce the inappropriate use of opioids while preserving the vital role of hospital EDs in treating patients with emergent medical conditions. They are part of a broader statewide strategy to reduce the impact of opioid addiction, and demonstrate the willingness of hospitals and physicians to engage in multi-sector collaboration with the state to reduce the misuse and abuse of opioids and other prescription drugs in Connecticut.

Abuse-deterrent drugs are manufactured with physical, chemical, or other barriers that make abuse more difficult or less attractive to patients. These drugs are emerging as another important tool for addressing prescription opioid abuse. CHA believes that a statewide strategy to combat opioid abuse should include a requirement that health insurance policies provide coverage for prescription drugs for abuse-deterrent opioid analgesics. The availability

of insurance coverage for these drugs will increase opportunities for long-term substance abuse recovery for patients who suffer as a result of the misuse of prescription opioids, and provide a valuable tool for healthcare providers to treat patients suffering from chronic pain, while minimizing the potential for addiction and abuse.

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