

**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
Wednesday, March 24, 2021**

HB 6653, An Act Concerning Healthy Homes

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **HB 6653, An Act Concerning Healthy Homes**. CHA supports this bill.

Before commenting on this bill, it is important to acknowledge that, since early 2020, Connecticut's hospitals and health systems have been at the center of the global public health emergency, acting as the critical partner in the state's response to COVID-19. Hospitals expanded critical care capacity, stood up countless community COVID-19 testing locations, and are a critical component of the vaccine distribution plan. Through it all, hospitals and health systems have continued to provide high-quality care for everyone, regardless of ability to pay. This tireless commitment to the COVID-19 response confirms the value of strong hospitals in Connecticut's public health infrastructure and economy and reinforces the need for a strong partnership between the state and hospitals.

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 18.8 percent of Connecticut households have at least one of four severe housing problems: incomplete kitchen facilities, incomplete plumbing facilities, more than 1.5 persons per room, and a ratio of housing costs to household income greater than 50 percent.ⁱ In addition, recent assessments by the Department of Public Health examining the prevalence and persistence of hazards and health-related issues found that 31.2 percent of homes visited contained evidence of mold growth, 42.6 percent lacked a functioning stove exhaust fan/vent in the kitchen, 54.1 percent did not have a carbon monoxide (CO) alarm or had one without power or battery present, and 21.8 percent had an unvented combustible appliance present, which is a direct source of CO in the home.ⁱⁱ

Connecticut's hospitals have been working to address the wide array of factors that contribute to poor health and avoidable health problems in our communities—what are frequently referred to as social determinants of health (SDOH). Housing in general, and health-related issues in particular, need be to an area of focus at the state and local level if we are going to be successful in addressing preventable health issues in our communities and associated health disparities.

HB 6653 would establish a pilot program to provide energy efficiency retrofits and residential improvements that reduce health and safety hazards found in residential dwellings. If directed to low-income households, the use of funds for energy efficiency will help with housing stability by reducing utility expenses. When directed to health and safety hazards, the improvements will reduce preventable health problems. We support the proposed initiative and encourage additional efforts by the state to address housing issues that contribute to housing instability and poor health.

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

ⁱ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy, 2011-2015

ⁱⁱ Connecticut Department of Public Health Healthy Homes Surveillance Report, 2017. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Departments-and-Agencies/DPH/dph/environmental_health/HH/HH-Surveillance-Report/Healthy-Homes-Surveillance-Report_2017.pdf?la=en