



**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
Wednesday, March 9, 2022**

HB 5190, An Act Concerning Testing For Human Immunodeficiency Virus

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **HB 5190, An Act Concerning Testing For Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)**.

Since early 2020, hospitals and health systems have been at the center of Connecticut's response to the COVID-19 public health emergency, acting as a vital partner with the state and our communities. Hospitals expanded critical care capacity, procured essential equipment and supplies, and stood up countless community COVID-19 testing locations. Hospitals have been an essential component of the statewide vaccine distribution plan including efforts to reach and serve historically under-resourced communities disproportionately affected by the virus. Through it all, hospitals and health systems have continued to provide high-quality care for everyone, regardless of ability to pay.

HB 5190 creates a universal HIV-testing environment throughout Connecticut for all primary care settings and in all hospital emergency departments, with the ability for a patient to opt out of testing. Under the bill, providers would be mandated to automatically offer an HIV test to any person aged 13 through 65.

We will focus our comments on the provisions in HB 5190 that apply to hospital emergency departments. Hospital emergency departments are not the best setting to conduct this type of routine testing, as hospital emergency departments are treating patients with emergency conditions, such as chest pains, broken limbs, and difficulty breathing.

In addition, HB 5190 requires every physician, physician assistant, and APRN to develop their own protocols and offer every patient they treat an HIV-related test. In practice, as drafted, HB 5190 would often result in a patient being offered an HIV-related test more than once and likely several times, which has the potential to actually discourage testing.

CHA supports the goal of HB 5190 to ensure that HIV is detected as early as possible. Historically, CHA and its member hospitals have worked routinely and collaboratively with the HIV community and the Department of Public Health (DPH) on these important issues.

CHA and its member hospitals stand ready to assist DPH, the Department of Social Services, the Connecticut State Medical Society and any other stakeholders in determining if there are ways to achieve the goal of improved, targeted screening for HIV in a manner consistent with CDC guidance, as well as to foster better education for primary care providers to increase medically appropriate screening for HIV.

We urge the Committee not to take action on HB 5190, as drafted, this session and require DPH and other stakeholders to meet this summer and fall to chart a path forward to achieve the goal of this bill.

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