



**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
Thursday, March 7, 2024**

HB 5371, An Act Concerning A Working Group To Study Expanding Husky Health Benefits To All Uninsured Residents Under The Age Of Nineteen

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **HB 5371, An Act Concerning A Working Group To Study Expanding Husky Health Benefits To All Uninsured Residents Under The Age Of Nineteen**. CHA offers the following comments on the bill.

Connecticut hospitals are critical to their communities. They are confronting the challenges posed by a post-pandemic healthcare system with an exemplary healthcare workforce that continues to provide outstanding care. But challenges remain. Hospitals are treating sicker patients, it continues to be challenging to hire and retain staff, and the financial headwinds are grave. Through it all, hospitals are steadfast, providing high-quality 24-hour care for everyone who walks through their doors, focusing on making Connecticut's healthcare system more equitable, and driving world-class innovation right here in Connecticut.

HB 5371 requires the Commissioner of Social Services to convene a working group to study the costs and benefits of expanding HUSKY Health benefits to all uninsured residents under the age of 19, regardless of income or immigration status.

CHA appreciates that HB 5371 seeks to build on the important investments that have already been made to expand access to health insurance coverage, including last year's extension of HUSKY Health coverage to qualifying children between the ages of 12 and 15, regardless of immigration status—an expansion which CHA supported. As CHA has consistently argued in the past, as the legislature considers legislation to expand state-operated and subsidized health insurance options, it should do so while avoiding policies that would undermine the commercial health insurance market.

CHA appreciates that the working group report required by the legislation includes a review of the impact of the legislation on the private (commercial) insurance market. In addition, CHA recommends that the working group explore the definition of "uninsured" for purposes of the report. Specifically, the working group should consider how an individual's or family's insurance status is considered if the individual or family have an offer of affordable insurance

by an employer or if the individual or family are eligible for premium assistance and cost-sharing reductions through Access Health CT.

As noted earlier, as the state considers further expansion of publicly-financed health insurance, it is important that there is a complete understanding of how that expansion will impact other parts of the health insurance market.

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