

**TESTIMONY OF
BRIDGEPORT HOSPITAL
Submitted to the
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
February 16, 2007**

Medicaid Funding

On behalf of Bridgeport Hospital, we appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony on the Department of Social Services budget which includes oversight of and funding for the State's Medicaid program.

Full Medicaid cost reimbursement must be part of any plan that seeks to increase access to health care. Bridgeport Hospital serves a significant number of Medicaid patients. In Fiscal Year 2005, the Hospital had almost 5,000 Medicaid discharges, which represents nearly 24% percent of total discharges for that year. Bridgeport Hospital receives only 69 cents for every dollar spent on providing care to our patients who are enrolled in Medicaid Managed Care. In FY 2005, our Medicaid Managed Care shortfall was \$4.2 million; our shortfall from all Medicaid programs was \$15 million. According to Connecticut Hospital Association data, statewide Medicaid losses for all hospitals totaled nearly \$250 million. This under reimbursement can not continue as we seek to increase access to quality health care.

Bridgeport Hospital strives to be both a provider and employer of choice that delivers safe, high quality care. We serve residents from the City of Bridgeport and the surrounding towns, and are the health care safety net for many of our patients. Last year, we provided more than 200,000 outpatient and emergency room visits and almost 20,000 inpatient stays. Additionally, with 2,200 employees, Bridgeport Hospital is one of the largest employers in the greater Bridgeport area.

Over the years, we have had to use our operating dollars to cover Medicaid underpayment which has left less money to reinvest in our organization. Without money to reinvest, our facilities have become outdated, and we have had to delay implementation of key programs that can improve the quality of care for our patients.

Currently, Bridgeport Hospital has an aging facility infrastructure that needs major reinvestment to keep the building running efficiently. This year, we are replacing generators and air handling systems. Over the next few years, we need to upgrade our heating and cooling systems and our elevators. These projects have been delayed over the years due to lack of available resources. In addition, to meet the increasing demands of our patients, we need to modernize and update our patient care rooms. The lack of adequate funding for Medicaid has slowed our ability to invest in these basic infrastructure upgrades that will benefit our patients, physicians and staff.

To provide a safe environment, we also need to invest in electronic medical records and other clinical information systems that will reduce medical errors and improve care for our patients. These systems will enhance patient safety and quality, and we want to implement them as quickly as we can. However, it costs millions of dollars to do so. While we have started to make these investments, we are doing them over the course of several years, as we have the funding available. The inadequate reimbursement from Medicaid, which we are forced to cover through other operating revenues, is the largest part of the issue.

Bridgeport Hospital is a valuable asset to the greater Bridgeport region and the State. We train hundreds physicians and nurses; operate Connecticut's **only burn service**; are a recognized leader in cardiac care; and have the **only Pediatric Intensive Care Unit in Fairfield County**. We take our mission seriously and are proud to be the safety net provider for the community. However, we need to be paid fairly so we can continue to maintain our infrastructure, invest in necessary technology, and offer all the services that are needed by our patients. Health care providers need to be paid what it costs to care for the people enrolled in state programs.

Thank you for your consideration of our position on this important health matter.