



**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
Tuesday, February 20, 2007**

**SB 198, An Act Concerning The Availability Of Interpreter Services
Under The Medicaid Program**

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony concerning **SB 198, An Act Concerning The Availability Of Interpreter Services Under The Medicaid Program.**

SB 198 would require the Commissioner of Social Services to amend the Medicaid state plan to include interpreter services as a covered service under the Medicaid program. CHA supports the goal of allowing interpreter services to be covered under the Medicaid program in order to improve care for patients with limited English proficiency (LEP).

Healthcare disparities can arise when patients encounter barriers to communication. Hospitals already provide interpreter services for their many LEP patients, but generally are not reimbursed for the costs of providing these services. In some other settings, LEP services may not be readily available, exposing LEP patients to potential difficulties in obtaining health insurance coverage or scheduling appointments with primary care providers. Without an interpreter, these patients may have trouble communicating their needs, which can lead to confusion and ultimately to higher healthcare costs. Allowing interpreter services to be reimbursed under the Medicaid program is a small, but meaningful step in assisting hospitals that are already using resources to provide this vital service to their LEP patient population. Each year the need for LEP services increases significantly, further challenging our healthcare system.

In addition to allowing interpreter services to be covered under the Medicaid program, CHA recommends that the state take the lead and contract for language interpretation services for all LEP patients, and administer a statewide program through which Connecticut hospitals and other healthcare providers could access medical interpreters. This would enable healthcare providers to focus on taking care of patients while having access to more efficient and consistent interpreter services.

Thank you for your consideration of our position.

For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.