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### **Mend the Safety Net Before Expanding Entitlements**

January 31, 2007, Wallingford, CT – Testifying before the Public Health Committee today, the Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) reiterated its commitment to supporting initiatives that improve access to health insurance coverage for Connecticut residents, but restated the necessity of ensuring adequate funding to cover the cost of such care.

“Connecticut’s healthcare safety net *must* be mended before more entitlements are considered – full Medicaid cost reimbursement to hospitals must be a cornerstone of any reform program,” said Stephen Frayne, Senior Vice President, Health Policy at CHA.

Annually, hospitals are forced to cover approximately \$320 million in care provided to beneficiaries of Medicaid and SAGA, as well as to the uninsured. These three groups make up nearly a quarter of the state’s population.

“What is ironic, but sad, is that for hospitals the burden of caring for the uninsured pales in comparison to the burden of caring for those insured by the state. The lack of adequate funding for Medicaid and SAGA exceeds by three times the lack of adequate funding for the uninsured. As a state, we can and should do far better than this.”

The uninsured have access to hospital care throughout Connecticut, according to CHA. What the uninsured lack is the means by which to pay for that care. Instead, the uninsured have to rely on the charitable nature of Connecticut’s hospitals to provide care to all regardless of their ability to pay for it.

CHA is urging lawmakers to make investing in the health of Connecticut residents a priority this legislative session. Hospitals need to be paid what it costs to serve individuals enrolled in state programs. In all fairness, the state cannot offer healthcare to its most vulnerable citizens, yet not be willing to pay for it.

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