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***Heart Center of Greater Waterbury Delivers 12,000 Signed Letters of Support***

Public Hearing in Hartford on October 30 to determine fate of Heart Center

**Waterbury, Conn., October 28, 2008** – Letters signed by more than 12,000 patients who support a proposal to grant permanent status to the Heart Center of Greater Waterbury were delivered today to the state's Office of Health Care Access (OHCA) for consideration at a public hearing on Thursday.

According to Loraine Shea, executive director of the Heart Center, the Greater Waterbury community has come together in an overwhelming show of support, submitting more than 18,000 letters since the Heart Center began fighting for its life in early July. Six thousand letters were delivered to OHCA in August at a public hearing that resulted in a six-month extension for the Heart Center program.

The letters signed by patients and community residents include heart-felt testimonials about their experiences at the Heart Center and why it should remain in Waterbury.

"The community has spoken," said Shea. "So many people have shared their personal stories about the Heart Center and told us why they feel it should be a permanent fixture in our community. They have rallied behind us throughout this entire process, and we encourage them to come and show their support once more to help keep our hearts in the right place, permanently."

The Heart Center provides lifesaving cardiovascular procedures such as angioplasty and open heart surgery to a region of more than 280,000 patients. The center has saved more than 2,400 lives and has a patient satisfaction rating of more than 98 percent. According to Shea, "The permanent status hearing is our opportunity to highlight our three-year history of quality performance, and to reiterate that these services are essential to the residents of Greater Waterbury."

The public is invited to attend the OHCA hearing in Hartford on Thursday, October 30. The hearing will be held at 9:00 am in Room 2C of the Legislative Office Building (LOB) in Hartford to determine if the Heart Center will remain open permanently in Waterbury.

The Waterbury Mayor's Office is providing transportation for those wishing to attend the hearing. Buses will leave from the Sears Automotive parking lot at the Brass Mill Center Mall at 7:45 am. To reserve a seat, email [stefanie.falco@stmh.org](mailto:stefanie.falco@stmh.org) or call 203-709-6214.

For more information about the Heart Center of Greater Waterbury, please visit [www.supporttheheartcenter.org](http://www.supporttheheartcenter.org).

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