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Congressman Courtney Announces Renewal Of Medicare Dependent Hospital Program for Windham Hospital

Program Restores \$5.2-million in Funding for Hospital Services

*Courtney also Lauds President's Executive Order
Improving Access to Mental Health Care*

Willimantic---Congressman Joe Courtney (D-CT 2nd District), joined by **Windham Hospital and Natchaug Hospital President and CEO Steve Larcen** and hospital staff, announced today the renewal of the Medicare Dependent Hospital (MDH) program, restoring \$5.2-million to the hospital and ensuring that Windham Hospital will continue to offer a full range of essential medical services to residents of eastern Connecticut. In addition, Congressman Courtney met with hospital staff to discuss the benefits of President Obama's executive orders to improve access to mental health services.

Earlier this month Congress, as part of the "fiscal cliff" legislation, agreed to renew the MDH program thanks in part to a push by Congressmen Courtney and **Congressman John Larson**, a member of the House Ways and Means Committee. The program expired on September 30, 2012.

MDH provides enhanced reimbursement for small rural hospitals that have at least 60-percent of inpatient days or discharges covered by Medicare. Small rural hospitals are more vulnerable to inadequate Medicare payments than other

hospitals, because they are less able to cross-subsidize with private payer reimbursements. As such, Congress established special payment protections to buttress these hospitals. Windham Hospital is the only hospital in the state and one of 212 nationwide that meet the criteria supported by MDH.

“Windham Hospital has long provided high-quality, cost-effective care to the residents of Windham and surrounding counties,” said Congressman Courtney. “The Medicare Dependent Hospital (MDH) program, which expired last October, has helped ensure fair Medicare reimbursements for this care. Fortunately, the American Taxpayer Relief Act included a year-long extension of the MDH program, upholding an obligation for fair Medicare payments to Windham and dozens of other hospitals and ensuring that Medicare beneficiaries continue to receive the quality care they need and deserve.”

The \$5.2-million in funding from MDH represented about 6-percent of Windham Hospital’s operating budget in 2012.

“The loss of funding through the Medicare Dependent Hospital program would have been devastating in our effort to provide critical health care services to residents of eastern Connecticut,” said Larcen. “I thank Congressmen Courtney and Larson for their commitment and determination to ensure the people of eastern Connecticut have access to world-class care right here in the community and that Windham Hospital remains a vital component of the local economy.”

The provision in the “fiscal cliff” legislation extends the MDH program until October 1, 2013.

President’s Executive Order Means More Access to Mental Health Service for All

Also on Monday, Congressman Courtney met with staff from Windham Hospital and Natchaug Hospital to discuss the President’s executive orders to improve access to mental health care.

The orders, which sought to reduce gun violence and improve school safety in response to the Sandy Hook tragedy, also outlined a plan for mental health care. The plan includes:

- Launching a national conversation to increase understanding about mental health
- Finalizing requirements for private health insurance plans to cover mental health services
- Ensuring millions of Americans covered by Medicaid get quality mental health coverage
- Reaching 750,000 young people through programs to identify mental illness early and refer them to treatment
- Providing “Mental Health First Aid” training for teachers
- Training more than 5,000 additional mental health professionals to serve students and young adults

“Engaging our leaders in a conversation about mental health care is a crucial first step in helping to prevent tragedies like Sandy Hook, Aurora, Oak Creek, and Tucson,” said Larcen who also serves as President and CEO of Natchaug Hospital. “We need to remove the stigma of mental illness and ensure that patients receive the same type of access to care they would for other medical conditions a key aspect of the 2008 national Mental Health parity legislation.”

Windham Hospital, founded in 1933, is a non-profit, acute-care community hospital serving 19 eastern Connecticut towns. It has 131 beds, conducts nearly 4,000 surgeries annually, and its emergency department has been ranked among the top 1 percent of hospitals nationwide for patient satisfaction.

Natchaug Hospital is the primary provider of a regional system of care for children, adolescents and adults with mental illness and substance abuse problems. The hospital's 57-bed facility in Mansfield Center, Connecticut, provides inpatient care for over 650 seriously emotionally disturbed children and adolescents as well as 1,300 adults in crisis each year. Natchaug's day hospital, after school and special education school programs provide treatment to more than 2,750 children, adolescents and adults each year throughout eastern Connecticut.

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