



**Connecticut Office of Health Strategy Testimony in Support of  
House Bill 7148 – AAC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2021**

**Executive Director Victoria Veltri**

**March 1, 2019**

Good afternoon, Senator Catherine Osten, Representative Toni Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Victoria Veltri, Executive Director of the Office of Health Strategy Health (OHS), and I'm here to testify in support of the Governor's Biennial Budget for the Office of Health Strategy for fiscal years 2020 and 2021.

The General Assembly, in a strong bipartisan effort, fully established OHS in 2018 to centralize health policymaking, better coordinate existing state resources, and advance the reforms that will drive down healthcare costs; address our state's deeply entrenched racial, economic, and gender health disparities; and undertake technology-driven modernization efforts.

Underpinning everything we do is our mission to forward high-quality, affordable, and accessible healthcare for all residents. A healthy population creates value for employers, is necessary for a strong economy, and is key to a high quality of life. We have a truly collaborative relationship with a variety of partners, experts, consumers, and stakeholder groups that help us examine and address the barriers in Connecticut's health system—cost, access, and outcomes.

OHS must be responsive to the ever-evolving healthcare landscape. We continue to examine the impact of federal rule changes and forward the initiatives that strengthen healthcare policy in Connecticut. Since OHS was fully established I'm pleased to report that:

- OHS has received a \$12 million federal grant to support the rollout of the first statewide Health Information Exchange, an initiative that will connect providers and patients and strengthen population health data gathering.
- OHS established a community health worker advisory committee and submitted a report to the legislature recommending steps for certification. This will expand care teams and directly address social determinants of health.

- OHS is working closely with the Comptroller and the Insurance Department on implementation of Public Act 18-41 to contain prescription drug costs by mandating that drug companies justify price increases.
- OHS and the Comptroller are developing a Connecticut healthcare affordability standard to better understand the implication of policy change on healthcare costs.
- OHS launched a value-based insurance design consortium to help large employers incentivize employees to engage in preventive care and management of chronic diseases.
- OHS modified the Certificate of Need application to address payment and delivery reforms and streamlined the process to remove delays. The CON process is now more transparent and engages communities through a new one-stop web page.
- OHS established Health Enhancement Communities, geographic areas that target interventions, help prevent costly health conditions, and improve social determinants of health like housing, education, and jobs.
- OHS will continue to dedicate resources to support robust consumer engagement across Connecticut. These initiatives connect us to the diverse needs of our communities and help us maintain the partnerships that inform our work.

### **Proposed 2020 -2021 Biennial Budget**

The Governor’s proposed OHS budget totals \$5.996 million in FY 2020 with \$2.068 million coming from the General Fund and \$3.937 million from the Insurance Fund. For FY 2021, the proposed amount is \$6.178 million, with \$2.149 million from the General Fund and \$4.028 million from the Insurance Fund. Below are some of the highlights of the biennial budget.

#### *Agency Operations*

Under Conn. Gen. Stat. 19a-754a(b), the Agency will continue to drive efforts to “develop and implement a comprehensive and cohesive healthcare vision for the state.” With an eye on using our budget in the most effective and strategic way to get the most gains for Connecticut residents, we will monitor and evaluate our workforce needs and continue to analyze Other Expense needs, achieving cost savings through efficiencies, leveraged support, and other measures. OHS prioritizes community and public engagement in our efforts to ensure a strong, accessible healthcare system for all residents.

- OHS was established in 2018 – resources were pulled from the former Office of Health Care Access (OHCA) under the Department of Public Health. Additional resources came from the State Innovation Model Program Management Office (SIM PMO) under the

Office of Healthcare Advocate.

- OHS will fill vacancies to ensure that we are meeting with the highest integrity our obligations under our six statutory responsibilities, directing our three primary programs, and coordinating OHS' multiple stakeholder groups to the best benefit of taxpayers.

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the Governor's proposed FY 2020-2021 budget for the Office of Health Strategy. I would be happy to answer any questions.