



THE OFFICE OF HEALTH STRATEGY URGES SUPPORT FOR SENATE BILL 96, AAE A TASK FORCE TO EXAMINE THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS IN CONNECTICUT

Senate Bill 96, *An Act Establishing a Task Force to Examine the Recruitment and Retention of Primary Care Providers in the State*, highlights a critical reality in healthcare systems in Connecticut and nationally – without ready access to high-quality medical providers, not only will the Affordable Care Act goals suffer, but Connecticut’s progress towards reforming and modernizing our healthcare system will falter. In keeping with the mission of the Office of Health Strategy (OHS) to strengthen the quality, accessibility, and equity of Connecticut’s healthcare system, OHS supports this legislation because it will expand primary care provider teams, improve consumer experience, and facilitate better outcomes for population health.

Connecticut’s current healthcare landscape will certainly be impacted by a projected national deficit of 50,000 primary care providers over the next 10 years. For Connecticut to even maintain its current coverage levels, more than 400 new primary care providers need begin providing care by 2030.¹ Diminishing incentives, including low reimbursement rates and increasing administrative workloads, contribute to significant burn-out of primary care providers—more of whom are choosing to work only part-time hours—and driving medical residents into more lucrative specialties, leaving gaps in the primary care workforce pipeline.

Connecticut has additional challenges to overcome to close the very significant gaps in healthcare and outcomes facing the state’s minority residents and those with low incomes. The Connecticut Health Foundation reports that infants born to African-American women in Connecticut are three times more likely to die than infants of white women and Hispanics are four times more likely to need emergency department intervention for asthma than whites.

In partnership with other state agencies, organizations, and hundreds of providers, stakeholders, and consumers, Connecticut has undertaken a myriad initiatives to address healthcare inequities, expand care options, and take a more holistic view of health to include nutrition, housing, education, and other social determinants.

OHS’ vision for strengthening primary care includes payment system reforms that invest in expanded and more diverse care teams. Team-based primary care allows doctors to actually grow their patient panel by diversifying the types of providers who can most benefit their patients. Adding pharmacists, community health workers, and behavioral health clinicians to a primary care team allows on-site medication reconciliation, assistance with transportation, housing, food security, and many other conditions that impact a person’s health.

SB 96 recognizes that the demand for healthcare services will continue to grow and, by promoting a stable, high-quality primary care workforce, puts Connecticut in the best position to respond.

¹ Hamm, S. (2019, February 11). Nurse practitioners filling the primary care gap. *Connecticut Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.ctpost.com/local/article/Nurse-practitioners-filling-the-primary-care-gap-13607148.php>