



***Written Testimony before the Public Health Committee
Submitted by the Department of Social Services
March 13, 2023***

SB 986 AN ACT PROTECTING MATERNAL HEALTH.

Section 12 addresses universal newborn nurse home visiting, an evidence-based model that offers families who give birth to a newborn child to receive a nurse home visit within the first few weeks of life. A trained registered nurse will assess the families for maternal depression/anxiety and adverse childhood events. The universal nurse home visiting model has demonstrated a reduction in maternal anxiety/depression, child protective services investigations for maltreatment, and emergency medical care use, and costs.¹

This bill requires the Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) in collaboration with the Commissioners of the Departments of Social Services (DSS), Public Health (DPH), Child and Family services (DCF) and the Executive Director of the Office of Health Strategy (OHS) to design a statewide, evidence-based nurse home visiting model. The Department of Social Services will work in collaboration with OEC, OHS, and commercial payors on multi-payor alignment while encouraging coverage of the model’s services under commercial insurers’ benefit plans. This joint effort promotes important collaborative efforts between state agencies and commercial payors that make a positive impact on the health and well-being of the people and communities of Connecticut.

This bill will reduce maternal and infant mortality, build community connections, and promote family bonding. Additionally, this bill will reduce disparities exacerbated by COVID-19 such as mental and behavioral concerns, intimate partner violence, and substance use issues for pregnant and postpartum women. 48% of annual births in Connecticut are to those who have Medicaid as an insurer or those who are Medicaid-eligible. DSS acknowledges the need to continue reducing disparities and improve maternal and infant health outcomes by providing nurse home visits that will help families achieve health equity by intervening on identified social determinants of health and providing the needed resources.

Connecticut has several home visiting models available to Medicaid and non-Medicaid eligible families through OEC. These models provide a foundation of support to families with small

¹ Family Connect International. (2019). <https://sites.duke.edu/familyconnects/resources/articles-reports/>. This link will bring you to a page with multiple peer reviewed articles on the universal nurse home visiting model by Family Connects.

children but have limited outreach to the families of Connecticut due to insufficient funding. This bill will expand outreach of services to the mothers, children, and families of Connecticut and continue to improve health outcomes for all.

The Department of Social Services appreciates and supports the Governor's proposed bill and urges passage.

[HB 6669](#) AN ACT PROTECTING PATIENTS AND PROHIBITING UNNECESSARY HEALTH CARE COSTS.

The Department strongly supports this bill. Although many sections of House Bill 6669 do not directly affect members while they are enrolled in the Medicaid program, the Department has a strong interest in this bill because, over time, many people switch between having Medicaid coverage and other non-Medicaid forms of health insurance. During these lapses in Medicaid eligibility, it is important that individuals be able to find affordable health care coverage, especially affordable prescription drugs.

This bill will lower overall health care costs, especially by making prescription drugs more affordable. By ensuring access to affordable coverage, this bill helps promote the health of all Connecticut residents, including individuals when they enroll in Medicaid. Enrolling healthier Medicaid members, in turn, will help reduce total costs to the Medicaid program.

The Department supports HB 6669 and urges passage.