

January 14, 2022

From Social Welfare Action Alliance CT (SWAA CT) Coordinating Committee
To: Tina Hyde Ct Office of Health Strategy
RE: Public comment in Opposition of "Roadmap for Strengthening and Sustaining Primary Care"

The Ct SWAA chapter is a group of professional social workers and allies working in partnership with those communities who identify as being most negatively impacted by current societal inequities to educate, discuss and organize around correcting these inequities. We believe that "those closest to problem are closest to the solution but are furthest from the resources and power." We work to bring the opinion of those subject to those inequities in Ct to the source of power, in this case the Ct Office of Health Strategy. Our stated priorities are: Advancing 1-racial, economic and social justice, 2- health care as a human right, 3-policing, justice and prison transformation leading to abolition,4-voter and election reform 5-Tax equity and fairness.

SWAA CT respectfully submits that the "Roadmap" is a solution for a problem that the community and most stakeholders do not see as pressing at this time. From our perspective, the overwhelming majority of Ct citizens and particularly those receiving Medicaid report having a relationship with a primary care practitioner that they are satisfied with and express that they want to maintain that relationship. We submit that CT citizens do not want to see their relationship with their primary care provider disrupted particularly during this time of a public health emergency and pandemic. What SWAA Ct has heard from grassroots stakeholders and the "patient" community is they are not requesting primary care "reform", but rather want **access to and increased funding for mental health services, substance abuse treatment, and access to quality medical specialty providers and community-based health care workers/navigators particularly for children, the elderly and those with multiple and complex health conditions and disabilities.** This "community need" and preference was highlighted in the recent "Recovery for All" symposium bringing together citizens, advocates and legislators. It is SWAA CT's assessment that there is not grassroots, stakeholders or patient community support for using existing and limited health care dollars to develop a new funding mechanism for a system of capitated or truncated rates for primary care providers particularly at this time. SWAA Ct realizing that there is currently limited and inadequate funding for all medical services, believe that implementing the "Roadmap" promoting a primary care capitate rate system will disrupt the relationship citizens have with their primary care doctor and ignore the expressed funding need for **increased access to and funding for mental health services, substance abuse treatment, access to specialists and community based health care workers/navigator particularly for children, the elderly and those with multiple and complex health conditions and disabilities.**

SWAA CT also respectfully submits that in conversation with those in the medical community, many of whom we identify as first responders, we have heard numerous reservations **that 2022 is not the time** to make this complicated change in primary health care delivery. Primary care providers like all of us in 2022 are in **the middle of a pandemic** and SWAA Ct believes this is not a good time for this type of radical change system wide. We suggest that this type of billing, funding and oversight change will cause disruption and chaos administratively and we believe will certainly lead to increased disrupted care for many patients. **We suggest that this is a year, 2022, to evaluate, take stock, dialogue, research and listen and is not a year for implementing a major disruption of the primary care system.**

For these reasons as well as the concerns raised by others:

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SWAA CT coordinating committee recommends that the “Roadmap for Strengthening and Sustaining Primary Care” NOT be implemented at this time.

We respectfully suggest instead:

- 1- That the Ct Office of Health Strategy facilitate a year of dialogue and conversation on health care delivery, health care priorities, and research bringing together consumers, providers, community advocates, nonprofits, neighborhood groups, state administrators, legislators all voicing their needs, wants and concerns around the health care delivery system. From these dialogues perhaps Ct Office of Health Strategies could also develop RFPs for **pilot projects** on integrated care with primary care and mental health or/and a capitated rate primary care pilot program. **We suggest getting much more input, consumer review and pilot project experience from all sectors of CT Before implementing the “Roadmap” is the best next step.**
- 2 That the Ct Office of Health Strategy join us and other stake holders in **highlighting the need for increased funding for all health care in CT** and encouraging the legislature and the state administration to advocate to give the wealthiest and all Ct residents an opportunity to pay their fair share in taxes to help make the needed investment in health care in 2022.

While the SWAA CT coordinating team is not recommending the program be implemented at this time, we thank you for the opportunity to offer comment and feedback on the proposed “Roadmap for Strengthening and Sustaining Primary Care” in Ct. We look forward to and encourage ongoing dialogue and collaboration on this important topic.