

CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF HEALTH CARE FACILITIES, INC.

February 18, 2015

Dear Legislator,

I wish to bring to your attention the following recent Op-Ed appearing in the Connecticut Mirror:



Op-Ed: Preserve Connecticut's Medicaid funding

Printed in the *CTMirror* | February 13, 2015

This commentary represents the views of Matthew Barrett, executive vice president, Connecticut Association of Health Care Facilities; Deborah Hoyt, president and CEO, Connecticut Association for Healthcare at Home; Jennifer Jackson, CEO, Connecticut Hospital Association; Matthew Katz, executive vice president, Connecticut State Medical Society; and Mag Morelli, president, LeadingAge Connecticut.

As the countdown begins to the Feb. 18 release of the state budget by Gov. Dannel Malloy, the health and well-being of our Medicaid patients and the future sustainability of the Medicaid program lie in the balance.

The Medicaid program provides health insurance for low income children, families, pregnant women, adults without children, as well as for seniors and people living with disabilities. This vulnerable population needs support. Decisions legislators will make in the next few months will determine how our healthcare system will serve and provide access to care for Medicaid patients; reductions in funding would be harmful.

The healthcare delivery system in Connecticut and across the country is in the midst of a positive transformational change. This change is being driven by the move to coordinate and integrate care, as well as by the Affordable Care Act's triple aim of improving care quality and outcomes, and achieving positive patient experiences for all.

The goal is that by providing better, more efficient and effective care, it will, in turn, slow the future growth of healthcare costs. We're working hard to make those goals a reality for everyone and especially for Medicaid patients, and our efforts are paying off.

We urge the state legislature to stay committed to this effort.

For several years, our healthcare associations have been working together to improve quality and reduce costs for all patients, residents, and clients. We are also committed to several initiatives under way with the state to improve the way care is being delivered to the more than 750,000 Connecticut residents enrolled in the Medicaid program – a program that has increased dramatically due to the Affordable Care Act.

With this significant a population, it is critical that we work together to ensure that those in the Medicaid program have access to, and receive, the very best care. This requires the preservation of Medicaid funding and support for initiatives that are working.

This movement to improve care in Connecticut is worth the investment and is already showing its value. Together, our groups are actively engaged in the state's efforts to redesign care delivery and payment models that will reduce the cost of care under the state Innovation Model grant, impacting an estimated 80 percent of the state's population. Long-term care and home care providers are supporting the Department of Social Services' (DSS) long-term care rebalancing plan to help save the state Medicaid funds while allowing those on Medicaid the choice to receive their long-term services and supports in a cost-effective home or community-based setting.

Hospitals, home care providers, and skilled nursing facilities are working hard and collaborating to help with patients' care transitions and avoid costly hospital readmissions. Hospitals are working with DSS to provide real-time information about admissions, discharges, and transfers to and from the hospital and the emergency department in an effort to better manage and coordinate care.

Physicians have been working with state and federal agencies on ways to improve quality and reduce costs, as well as to identify issues impacting health equity. These initiatives are making a difference in peoples' lives every day. And they are slowing and will continue to slow the growth of Medicaid spending.

As Connecticut continues to struggle with a slow-recovering economy and budget difficulties, we must stay focused on the initiatives that are providing effective care, reducing costs, and slowing the growth of Medicaid spending.

Reductions to those providing care across the continuum could turn back the clock on initiatives that are making a difference and will negatively impact access to care. It would also make it harder for the initiatives that are working to continue to achieve their goals.

We urge state policy makers to stay the course and to support the continuation of funding for these critical programs and for Medicaid providers across the continuum so that, together, we can continue to improve care and access to healthcare for everyone.

The Connecticut Hospital Association is a Connecticut Mirror sponsor.

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