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City of Bridgeport

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Town of Manchester

Claudine Wilkins-Chambers  
Local 3429  
New Haven Paraprofessionals

April 14, 2011

The Honorable Dannel P. Malloy  
Office of the Governor  
State Capitol  
210 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Governor Malloy:

Council 4 has been committed to the enactment of legislation to bring sorely needed reform to Connecticut’s health care system. Council 4’s members and their families comprise 100,000 Connecticut citizens who rely on that system. In 2009, after years of hard work in coalition with the Health Care Foundation, we were finally able to enact Sustinet. That legislation required the formation of a board charged with the responsibility to develop legislation to enact the Sustinet statute in the 2011 legislative session. That committee was comprised of representatives of our health care system, including CEOs, medical professionals and insurance company representatives. I was a member of that board. After another year of work, I am proud to say we reached broad agreement on what is now before the legislature. Things far less complicated than this generate many differences of opinion, and so it is with Sustinet. But one thing is inarguable: It is good legislation that will improve the lives of Connecticut’s citizens. I urge you to give it your full support.

Given the circumstances all of us find ourselves facing, questions of cost pervade our conversations and our thoughts. There is cost associated with the enactment of Sustinet, but those initial costs weigh lightly against the savings that are critical to Connecticut’s long term economic stability. I recall your remarks before you were governor that if health care costs are not brought down, Connecticut’s economy will continue to suffer. You wisely correlated long term economic stability with substantial health care reform. Sustinet is designed to do that. Traditional cost reduction methods advocated by the insurance industry have failed and will continue to fail.

Traditional cost reduction is the transfer of more of all of the cost to the patient. That forces patients to choose patients to put off diagnostic procedures they cannot afford. That delay will significantly increase the likelihood that bigger bills for treatment of advanced disease will follow.



The key to medical cost reduction is early detection and intervention. When a patient defers a diagnostic procedure he or she cannot afford, the cost of treatment will be far higher when the symptoms finally drive the patient to seek care, often beginning at the emergency room.

SustiNet is designed to encourage behavior that improves Connecticut citizens' health through various means including adoption of medical homes, development of best medical practices standards, intense study and development of methods to reduce the smoking addiction and obesity. Sustinet will provide affordable medical insurance to many more by making the state employee plan accessible to municipal employees and small businesses. Contrary to the assertions of those who stand to benefit from the status quo of small pools, large pools save money. Implementing our recommended design changes saves John Hopkins almost \$1,400 per patient; it saves North Carolina Medicaid \$535 million. It even saves Geisinger Health Plan, already a proponent of many of our design changes, a significant 7%.

During your campaign for Governor and in interviews immediately following your election, you described the reduction of pay, pensions and the shift of health care costs to those least able to pay as a "race to the bottom." We heartily agree, and our members were heartened by your early and earnest support of Sustinet. Sustinet's approach of decreasing costs by increasing wellness is the proven way to win this battle; reducing plan benefits takes us in the opposite direction.

The state employee health plan will become part of Sustinet, which some call a "Cadillac plan," clearly a derogatory term to imply overly rich benefits. It is a specious claim. The state plan was modest when it was launched, more like a Chevy, but unlike other plans it has not suffered degradation. That doesn't turn it into a Cadillac; it simply means the other Chevy plans suffered from poor upkeep and now belong in the junkyard.

Sustinet was designed to work with the federal Affordable Care Act. Those who falsely claim Connecticut will lose funding if it becomes law are doing what opponents of health care have done for a century: frightening Americans and their leaders. The method remains the same; only the message changes.

The unique economic design we call the American middle class has served to create unprecedented prosperity for working people thereby creating the world's largest economy. In your campaign for governor you said that, and you said that it is under unprecedented attack. We agree. Sustinet is critical materiel in the war to defend America's great invention: our broad productive middle class.



I began this letter by describing my personal roll in the development of Sustinet. I am no different from any other participant. There were parts of the plan with which I did not agree, but those who hold out for their idea of perfection make a terrible error. We now have a federal act, but we need its Connecticut companion, Sustinet. If the founders of this country had succumbed to personal preferences, or to the influence of those who would have gained by its demise, what would we have today? We have been at health care reform for a century, so I think is it appropriate to remind ourselves of Benjamin Franklin's famous advice at the Constitutional Convention: "Thus I consent, Sir, to this Constitution because I expect no better, and because I am not sure, that it is not the best. The opinions I have had of its errors, I sacrifice to the public good."

I respectfully ask for your leadership and your strong and broad support for Sustinet. As time is critical, I would appreciate it if you would agree to meet with those who continue to work for Sustinet's enactment next week.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sal Luciano". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "S" and "L".

Sal Luciano, Executive Director  
Council 4 AFSCME, AFL-CIO

SL/mcb