

Written testimony in support of Sustinet

Committee Chairmen, Senator Crisco and Representative Megna of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee; Committee Chairmen, Senator Musto and Representative Tercyak of the Human Services Committee; and Chairwomen, Senator Stillman and Representative Ritter of the Public Health Committee and distinguished committee members:

We are writing to you regarding Sustinet, on behalf of the Connecticut Chapter of the American College of Cardiology.

The American College of Cardiology (ACC) is a nonprofit medical association established in 1949 to advocate for quality cardiovascular care through education, research promotion, development and application of standards and guidelines, and to influence health care policy. The organization has 48 chapters in the United States and in Puerto Rico. The ACC has been called the “leading professional society for heart specialists.”

The ACC has 37,000 members, including physicians, registered nurses, clinical nurse specialists, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, doctors of pharmacology and practice administrators, specializing in cardiovascular care.

The ACC publishes practice guidelines and appropriate use criteria, formerly called appropriateness criteria, intended to improve the quality of cardiovascular care. While practice guidelines define the role of specific diagnostic and therapeutic modalities, appropriate use criteria define “when to do” and “how often to do” a given procedure, depending on context.

The ACC maintains several registries. The College’s largest registry is the National Cardiovascular Data Registry (NCDR), which measures and quantifies outcomes and identifies gaps in the delivery of cardiovascular care.

The ACC’s stated advocacy mission is “to develop sound health care policies and to foster an environment in which research, disease prevention, and patient access to quality care are understood, valued and promoted.”

The Connecticut Chapter of the American College of Cardiology (CCACC) fully endorses the concept of Sustinet and its attempt to offer universal

health insurance coverage for all of the people in Connecticut. We do, however, have some concerns regarding patient access and the role of providers.

We have personally seen our patients be denied access to specialists and even primary care physicians in the past under Charter Oak, a prior attempt at expanding health insurance coverage in Connecticut. This plan was very popular and reportedly had over 10,000 people purchase its cut-rate plan; but unfortunately, the reimbursement to doctors and other healthcare providers was extremely low and subsequently patients could not find a doctor who accepts it. Its failure was a blow to good public health, but not at all surprising. We cannot afford to make a similar mistake with Sustinet.

The CCACC understands the difficult balance between the cost to patients and taxpayers on one hand and paying providers on the other, but we feel that unless healthcare providers- including specialists like cardiologists- are involved in the details of Sustinet, it may fail like Charter Oak.

We would like to offer our services and ideas on how to make Sustinet a complete success and serve as a model for the rest of the country. The CCACC is eager and ready to help.

Sincerely,

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