

**TESTIMONY OF
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STAMFORD HEALTH
SUBMITTED TO THE
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
Monday, March 15, 2021**

Good morning. Stamford Health appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of **House Bill 5125, An Act Concerning the Provision of Immunity from Civil Liability for Entities that have Operated Pursuant to Health and Safety Guidelines During the COVID-19 Pandemic.**

Stamford Health is a comprehensive, independent, non-profit health care system that serves a region of approximately 650,000 people. We employ more than 3,600 people, making us the largest employer in the city of Stamford and one of the largest in Fairfield County. Beyond the lifesaving care we provide 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, we contribute more than \$1.2 billion to our state and local economy and provide more than \$90 million annually in uncompensated care to the residents that need it most. We are committed to providing friendly, compassionate personal care coupled with the most sophisticated services to all residents of lower Fairfield County.

House Bill 5125 will help for-profit and nonprofit business entities, including hospitals, by ensuring they are not liable for harm caused by exposure to, or transmission of, COVID-19 on their premises during the pandemic, provided they substantially complied with health and safe operation guidelines issued by the Governor or State Department of Health. House Bill 5125 would not prevent someone from suing, but as long as for-profit and non-profit entities appropriately followed safety rules, they would be immune from civil liability. To this extent, House Bill 5125 is more narrowly tailored than the Governor's Executive Order No. 7V, "Protection of Public Health and Safety During Covid-19 Pandemic and Response" (as extended), which provides immunity from suit for medical professionals and health care facilities for care rendered during the pandemic.

Stamford Health urges the Judiciary Committee to favorably report House Bill 5125 as it recognizes that businesses were faced with extraordinary circumstances presented by COVID-19. House Bill 5125 is especially important because healthcare entities, like Stamford Health, *literally opened their doors to those infected with Covid-19 or at risk for contracting Covid-19 as they cared for such patients.* Stamford Health, like other hospitals, has treated thousands of Covid-19 patients. In fact, Stamford's proximity to New York City made it an early hotspot. Stamford Health rapidly responded to an emergent and fluid situation and took immediate measures to keep its patients, staff, vendors and others on its campus safe, all while rendering essential care to patients and

community. Safety, providing novel treatments for very sick patients and taking every possible measure to avoid the spread of the virus were, and remain, Stamford Health's top priorities.

Fortunately, Stamford Health's COVID-19 inpatient census has been declining in the past several weeks. However, we unfortunately are unable to predict future surges related to COVID-19 and its variants, although we now know much more about this virus than a year ago. Stamford Health has remained steadfast throughout the pandemic in providing critical care and treatment to our patients, and our medical and administration leaders have used every opportunity to inform the public about how to stay safe.

We believe that – especially in light of the fact that community spread was highly prevalent during this pandemic regardless of hospital care – it is sound public policy to ensure that those who provided care are not penalized if they followed precautions issued by the scientific experts to guard against a virus that was circulating rampantly in our communities. At least seven other states have deemed this to be good public policy, and have provided immunity during the pandemic by statute or executive order.

House Bill 5125 would provide protection from civil liability for the period of time beginning upon Governor Lamont's declarations of public health and civil preparedness emergencies on March 10, 2020, and ending when such declarations are rescinded or end. Currently, the declarations are scheduled to end April 20, 2021. The protections would also apply to any future public health or civil preparedness emergency relating to COVID-19.

We ask the Judiciary Committee to favorably report HB 5125, because such a rare exception to our legal process is warranted in light of the unprecedented challenges caused by the rampant spread of COVID-19. Financial protection is needed for hospitals and other health care providers that served, and continue to serve, the public during this public health emergency. Thank you for consideration of our position.