



**Testimony from Paul Dworkin, MD- Pediatrician and Executive Vice President for
Community Child Health at Connecticut Children's Medical Center
to the Public Health Committee
Regarding House Bill 6653- *An Act Concerning Healthy Homes*
March 23, 2021**

Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, and other esteemed members of the Public Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share our support of House Bill 6653- *An Act Concerning Healthy Homes*.

My name is Dr. Paul Dworkin and I serve as the Executive Vice President for Community Child Health at Connecticut Children's Medical Center. I am submitting this testimony in support of this proposed legislation because we believe all children deserve to live, breathe, learn, and play in healthy environments.

Before commenting on the bill, I want to provide some background about the Office for Community Child Health (OCCH). At Connecticut Children's, we know that only about 10% of children's overall health and well-being is determined by the health care services they receive. Furthermore, 80 to 90% of our desired outcomes for children are driven by social, environmental, and behavioral factors. OCCH works to improve the social determinants of health such as housing, transportation, food and nutrition, and family support services. We know that strong families, healthy homes, and healthy communities build healthy children. The coronavirus pandemic has unfortunately only served to exacerbate many of the existing social and economic challenges facing families and we believe that the work we do within OCCH is now more important than ever.

The Connecticut Children's Healthy Homes Program and its team of licensed and certified experts, work to ensure that children and their families are able to thrive by fixing hazards in their homes, like lead paint, mold, asbestos and safety concerns like falls from windows/on stairs, fire safety and carbon monoxide hazards. With that focus on removing or remediating all health and safety hazards in a home, the program works with property owners and contractors to complete all renovations to strict specifications in accordance with federal, state, and local environmental and building specifications.

Program staff also educate families on the importance of maintaining a healthy home and connect families to community resources. The Healthy Homes Program also partners with state and local organizations that provide a broad range of services to address medical and social needs, including: asthma education, nutrition assistance, job readiness programs, energy efficiency and weatherization services, as well as care coordination services.

Asthma is the most common chronic childhood disease and one Public Health Report study found that as many as one in eight children hospitalized with uncontrolled asthma are re-admitted within six-months of discharge. We know that environmental exposures are critical in the initiation and exacerbation of asthma. The indoor environment, in particular the home, contains numerous exposures with the potential to influence asthma development and morbidity. Asthma incidence, morbidity, and mortality co-localize with poor housing conditions

and disproportionately afflict low-income, African-American, and Latino children. Hartford, for example, is riddled with old, poorly repaired housing stock (53% built before 1950). Medicaid data tells us that 18% of Hartford children have asthma, of whom 44% have persistent disease. Childhood asthma also accounts for the largest proportion of Medicaid spending on any health condition in Hartford. To that end, we would encourage funding in the proposed Healthy Homes Pilot Program to prioritize socially vulnerable communities where there is the greatest need for this type of critical assistance.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. If you have any questions about this testimony, please contact Emily Boushee (eboushee@connecticutchildrens.org), Government Relations Associate.