



**Testimony by the Connecticut State Medical Society
Senate Bill 1
An Act Equalizing Comprehensive Access to Mental,
Behavior and Physical Health Care in Response to the Pandemic**

**Public Health Committee
March 17, 2021**

Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee, on behalf of the physicians and physicians in training of the Connecticut State Medical Society (CSMS), thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony to you today on **Senate Bill 1, An Act Equalizing Comprehensive Access to Mental, Behavior and Physical Health Care in Response to the Pandemic**.

Senate Bill 1 is a comprehensive Bill addressing many areas of mental, behavioral, and physical health care. CSMS would like to offer comments on the following Sections of this Bill.

Section 4: CSMS supports the collection of information and data as it pertains to the State's COVID-19 response. CSMS would ask that one component of this study/report examine how community physicians can be included in the State's COVID-19 vaccination plans moving forward. As we look down the road to a post-pandemic environment, continuous COVID-19 vaccinations will likely be a part of the picture. CSMS would like to work with this Committee to ensure that community physicians are able to prioritize vaccinations and booster vaccinations for Connecticut's most medically compromised patients.

Section 6: CSMS supports this Section which would require that Connecticut recognize that racism is a public health crisis. Racism negatively impacts and exacerbates underlying health inequities among marginalized communities. Without change, health inequities will continue to exist and build, and the overall health of Connecticut's most vulnerable patients will suffer. The American Medical Association (AMA) passed policy at its November 2020 Special Meeting that recognized race as a public health threat and committed to dismantling racist policies across all of health care. CSMS applauds this Committee for the recognition racial disparities play in access to quality health care and we support this Section 6.

Section 7: CSMS supports the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that would be established under Section 7 of this Bill to examine racial disparities in public health, including access to health care. However, if a key focus of this Commission is access to health care, CSMS would ask that physicians have representation on this Commission. CSMS would request that one physician of CSMS' designation be included on this Commission.

Section 13: Section 13 asks the Commissioner of Public Health to establish a pilot program to allow emergency medical services personal to conduct home visits for individuals who are at high risk of being repeat users of emergency medical services. CSMS supports additional access to care for high-risk patients in Connecticut. However, we want to underscore the necessity of any treatment, assistance or intervention being reported to the patient's primary care physician and any specialty care physicians. CSMS is concerned that without statutorily required reporting, this Section could exacerbate

fragmented medical care. We want to underscore the need for continuity in the medical care provided to patients.

Section 14: CSMS opposes Section 14 of this Bill. Mental health screening is already a part of annual physical examinations. Medical care decisions are best left to physicians and their patients. We do not believe the legislature should be dictating medical care and, as such, we oppose this Section of the Bill and ask that it be removed.

Connecticut must tackle the issues of inequality and disparities in health care and CSMS believes this Bill includes some important steps in doing so. CSMS looks forward to working with this Committee on these critical issues.