

Statement of Connecticut Society of Acupuncturists
Appropriations Committee
House Bill 6439
March 3, 2021

Good afternoon Sen Osten and Rep. Walker and Members of the committee:

The Connecticut Society of Acupuncturists is a 501(c)(6) Non-profit, professional organization supporting acupuncture and Asian medicine, its practitioners and students in the state of Connecticut.

My name is Maggie Barili. I am a Registered Nurse and licensed Acupuncturist and I serve as president of our society.

I am testifying before you today to request that the next biennium budget include full coverage of Acupuncture services by Licensed Acupuncturists in our own state's Medicaid program.

The department's estimate is that adding Acupuncture to Medicaid would increase the state's share of expenditures by \$98,000 a year. This amount in a multi-billion Medicaid budget is extremely modest, and given the important benefits that Acupuncturist services provide, we hope that you can factor those dollars into the budget for fiscal 2022 and 2023.

Legislation to provide these benefits to Medicaid participants is pending in the Human Services committee. Section 1 of Senate Bill 764, *An Act Concerning Medicaid Providers*, makes this policy change. I believe the bill will be referred to you soon.

I would like to make a few points about the efficacy of acupuncture.

During the February 16 public hearing, Commissioner Diedre Gifford stated, and I quote, "*There is clinical evidence that acupuncture services are effective in addressing pain and other clinical conditions.*" She went on to say that acupuncture can play a role in reducing patients' pain without the use of narcotics.

There is now an abundance of peer reviewed studies on acupuncture illustrating its effectiveness in the treatment of a huge variety of pain manifestations which including migraines, postoperative pain, and enhanced recovery from surgery or injury. Acupuncture treatments have also been shown reduce anxiety and depression that is often associated with pain. It's especially important to consider that Acupuncture treatments have been shown to reduce the use of opioids to mitigate pain, helping patients reduce the often harmful side effects of opioid use, and function more productively.

These peer reviewed studies of the effectiveness of acupuncture treatments has also been proven to be quite cost effective in its reduction of expensive ongoing medical care, surgeries, and use of pharmaceuticals and to enhance and beneficially reduce the loss of productivity

Presently our services are included in many insurance and employer plans, including CT's insurance plan options for State employees and retirees.

But the low-income citizens of Connecticut who depend on Medicaid cannot access our services. Those people who are struggling financially, quite often due to chronic illness, pain, or even addiction to opioids because of their pain, deserve to have access to this effective medicine via CT Medicaid.

Based on emerging evidence and our experience, we feel Acupuncturist services would greatly benefit Medicaid patients and the program as a whole.

In conclusion, I thank you for your consideration of allowing the funding of this bill supporting the addition of licensed Acupuncturist services to our state's Medicaid program.