



**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
Monday, February 26, 2024**

**HB 5048, An Act Adjusting The State Budget For
The Biennium Ending June 30, 2025**

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **HB 5048, An Act Adjusting The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 30, 2025**. CHA opposes adding four positions to the Office of Health Strategy (OHS) as proposed.

Connecticut hospitals are critical to their communities. They are confronting the challenges posed by a post-pandemic healthcare system with an exemplary healthcare workforce that continues to provide outstanding care. But challenges remain. Hospitals are treating sicker patients, it continues to be challenging to hire and retain staff, and the financial headwinds are grave. Through it all, hospitals are steadfast, providing high-quality, 24-hour care for everyone who walks through their doors, focusing on making Connecticut's healthcare system more equitable, and driving world-class innovation right here in Connecticut.

HB 5048 provides for four new positions in OHS. Specifically, HB 5048 provides for:

- Two new positions to establish a Prescription Drug Affordability Board
- One position to implement proposed performance improvement plans in the cost growth benchmark program
- One position to support expanded financial oversight monitoring of hospitals

For years, starting pre-pandemic, hospitals and health systems advocated for changes to the Certificate of Need (CON) program in OHS because the process is unworkably slow, not enough staff are assigned to assess or review applications, and decisions and determinations can be literally years behind what the law contemplates.

Delays and excessive administrative burden and bureaucracy in the current CON process create barriers to healthcare access and affordability and hamper jobs development and economic growth. This interferes with the ability of providers to meet patient need and innovate. It also inhibits the collective work of providers and state agencies to perform the necessary planning and development work to adjust to patient and community needs.

We continue to implore OHS to improve the CON process by simply meeting their own statutory timelines and deadlines. CON applications should not take years to process.

Before OHS seeks additional staff to broaden the Office's work, it is paramount that they accomplish the work currently assigned. We urge the Committee to reallocate the newly designated positions to the CON program to ensure that OHS efficiently and effectively accomplishes one of its most important functions.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.