



**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
Thursday, March 7, 2024**

HB 5241, An Act Establishing A Bureau Coordinating Services For Deaf, Hard Of Hearing Or Deafblind Persons

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **HB 5241, An Act Establishing A Bureau Coordinating Services For Deaf, Hard Of Hearing Or Deafblind Persons**. CHA supports the bill.

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 5241 establishes a bureau within the Department of Aging and Disability Services to serve as a centralized resource for the deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing individuals within the state.

For several years, CHA has been working closely with the deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing community and other stakeholders to gain more insight into the challenges these individuals face not only in accessing healthcare but also in accessing other services throughout the state. Through those conversations, the impacts of the loss of a centralized state entity became obvious, along with the important need to reestablish the centralized bureau.

Section 2 of the bill requires the bureau's executive director to convene and chair a working group on access to healthcare by persons who are deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing and invite participation from organizations representing Connecticut hospitals and other healthcare facilities. CHA looks forward to working with the bureau.

Like so many other states, Connecticut does not have a large or available pool of qualified interpreters for deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing persons. And of the few that are available, many are not interested in working in healthcare-focused interpreting roles due to the unpredictable hours and demands that come with working in healthcare settings. Interpreting agencies play an important role in the state's overall ability and capacity to meet the demand for healthcare-based interpreting services. CHA strongly encourages the working group to include representatives from interpreting agencies to ensure the right stakeholders are engaged.

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