



**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
Monday, March 14, 2022**

SB 16, An Act Addressing Gun Violence And Juvenile Crime

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **SB 16, An Act Addressing Gun Violence And Juvenile Crime**. CHA supports **Section 33** of the bill.

Since early 2020, hospitals and health systems have been at the center of Connecticut's response to the COVID-19 public health emergency, acting as a vital partner with the state and our communities. Hospitals expanded critical care capacity, procured essential equipment and supplies, and stood up countless community COVID-19 testing locations. Hospitals have been an essential component of the statewide vaccine distribution plan including efforts to reach and serve historically under-resourced communities disproportionately affected by the virus.

Section 33 of **SB 16** provides for the establishment, within available appropriations, in the Office of Injury Prevention in the Department of Public Health (DPH), of a gun violence intervention and prevention program to (A) fund and support the growth of evidence-informed community violence and gun violence prevention and intervention programs in the state, (B) strengthen partnerships within the community, state and federal agencies involved in community violence prevention and intervention, (C) collect timely data on firearm and stabbing-involved injuries and deaths, and (D) evaluate effectiveness of strategies implemented under the program.

Connecticut hospitals have been collaborating with community partners, legislators, and other stakeholders for years to advance trauma-informed case management services to victims of violence, with the common goals of starting the healing process, supporting victims and their families, and preventing further violence. Hospital-based initiatives in Hartford, New Haven, and Bridgeport have focused on the needs of those who have suffered physical assault injuries (e.g., gunshots, stabbings, and blunt trauma) and sexual assault, as well as victims of human trafficking. These efforts and related work in other states have led to the establishment of a national hospital violence intervention program (HVIP), coordinated by the Health Alliance for Violence Intervention (HAVI), which provides training and certification for violence prevention professionals (VPPs).

VPPs often make an initial connection with victims while they are still in the hospital. They are available to victims and their families to coordinate victim assistance services under the Victims of Crime Act, to connect victims with mental health services, including brief trauma-focused therapy, to coordinate post-discharge medical follow-up for the treatment of injuries, to connect victims with opportunities for employment and educational advancement, and to coordinate referrals to community-based services for food, clothing, and legal advocacy. VPPs also focus on mitigating the risk of retribution in the hours and days after an incident.

State laws adopted in 2021 require state agency approval of programs to train and certify VPPs and coverage of these services under the Medicaid program.¹ Such measures will promote the implementation of HVIPs and related initiatives across the state. CHA and other hospital representatives were proud to serve on the Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention Advisory Committee established under these laws.

CHA welcomes the participation and involvement of the DPH Office of Injury Prevention in this ongoing work, which will enable our state to implement a unified, consistent, and sustainable statewide approach for hospitals, agencies, and community-based violence intervention programs to deliver targeted case management services to victims of violence and their families. For these reasons, CHA supports **Section 33** of **SB 16**.

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

¹ Senate Bill 1 (PA 21-35) An Act Equalizing Comprehensive Access To Mental, Behavioral and Physical Health Care In Response To the Pandemic and House Bill No. 5677 (PA 21-36) An Act Concerning The Availability Of Community Violence Prevention Services Under Medicaid.