

Testimony Supporting  
H.B. No. 5440 – Medicaid Coverage for Diabetes Self-Management Education (DSME)  
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Chairwoman Moore, Chairwoman Abercrombie, and Committee Members,

I submit the following written testimony in support of HB 5440 and I do so in my role as the Executive Director of Health Equity Solutions. Health Equity Solutions is a new organization in Connecticut committed to promoting policies, programs, and practices that result in equitable health care access, delivery, and outcomes for all people in Connecticut. Our vision is for every Connecticut resident to obtain optimal health regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

Diabetes is a health equity issue in Connecticut. There are nearly 350,000 people living in Connecticut with diabetes, with an estimated 70,000 people enrolled in Medicaid. Diabetes is the leading cause of blindness, kidney failure, lower limb amputation, heart disease, and stroke – all complications that be prevented and managed with proper education and knowledge. According to a March 2015 report from the Department of Public Health, the prevalence of diabetes is disproportionately higher in the African-American (13.6%) and Latino communities (10.6%), in comparison to the White population (8.1%). The mortality rates due are also highly imbalanced, with Black and Hispanic/Latino mortality rates of 93% and 67% respectively (Whites in Connecticut have mortality rates for due to diabetes of 47%).<sup>1</sup>

In many ways, Medicaid coverage of diabetes self-management education (DSME) can serve as a step toward addressing these inequities by providing high quality services and care that lead to better outcomes. HB 5440 seeks submission of a Medicaid state plan amendment that provides DSME to individuals with diabetes covered under Medicaid. DSME has been shown to improve management of diabetes and has shown a reduction in health care costs. DSME helps people with diabetes understand how best to manage their disease and teaches them about healthy behaviors that help stave its deadly and debilitating complications. Furthermore, DSME is currently a covered benefit under both Medicare and by state-regulated health plans in Connecticut. Why should Connecticut residents with Medicaid have different access to this beneficial service?

HB 5440 also requires submission of a Medicaid waiver which, if approved, allows Connecticut to provide diabetes prevention services to individuals as a five-year pilot. HES also supports this effort, so long as the language in the bill is changed to ensure that the waiver includes the evidence-based National Diabetes Prevention Program. This program is adapted from a clinical trial from the National Institutes of Health and has shown tremendous results in reducing diabetes risk.

HB 5440 takes a step in the direction toward optimal health by providing a services to residents that can ultimately improve their health and prevent disease. This aligns with HES' vision of a Connecticut where residents are able to obtain optimal health regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. We believe it should also be an important goal for every policymaker in the state.

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<sup>1</sup> Connecticut Department of Public Health. March 2015. *Connecticut Diabetes Statistics*.