

Policy Brief

# Connecticut's Health Care Crisis

A Policy Framework for Reform  
Executive Summary



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## A Policy Framework for Reform

### Executive Summary

Connecticut is facing a health care crisis. Our health care system is one of the costliest in the world. Yet, the high rate of spending has not translated into better health outcomes. While most Americans believe that our health care system is the best in the world, a number of studies indicate that Americans receive less than optimal care. Expanding access to cost effective, high quality health care is important to improving the health and productivity of Connecticut residents.

In early 2006, the Business Council of Fairfield County issued the *Connecticut Health Scorecard*. The Scorecard measures 26 indicators of Connecticut's health. The Scorecard clearly shows areas where Connecticut excels as a state, but more importantly, it reveals many more areas where Connecticut lags behind the rest of the nation and in some cases, ranks in the bottom 50 percent of states. The Scorecard points to a number of troubling factors, such as personal behaviors, risk factors, and health policies, that threaten to undermine the health of Connecticut's residents and workforce.

Too many Connecticut residents lack access to care because they lack health insurance. Deficits in health care quality pose a serious threat to the health of Connecticut's residents and come with a huge price tag adding billions in unnecessary health care expenditures.

The Business Council of Fairfield County believes that the State of Connecticut must act now to address this looming health care crisis. We offer the following policy framework for health care reform in Connecticut:

First, commit to a Healthy Connecticut.

- The state and each municipality should commit to the following goal: "Connecticut will be the healthiest state in the nation that has high quality health care delivered by the most effective, efficient, safe, timely, patient centered and equitable health care system."
- To achieve this goal, each state and municipal agency and department should identify how it can contribute to improved health status and quality of life for all of Connecticut residents and align their policies and programs accordingly. Connecticut must focus efforts not only on preventing disease, (e.g. support of immunization programs); but also preventing the complications of disease, (e.g. support of diabetes treatment programs).
- The state should undertake a comprehensive review of reimbursement policies for health care. Connecticut should develop and test various financing models that support a realignment of health service delivery to prevention and primary care services.
- The Governor and Legislature should convene a Healthy Connecticut Summit involving all stakeholders to develop a roadmap for comprehensive health care reform and an on-going process to sustain implementation efforts, such as creation of a Connecticut Health Care Reform Study Group.
- Progress toward a healthier Connecticut should be measured annually with results posted on the Governor's website.

Second, empower consumers and purchasers of health care to make informed decisions.

- To empower the consumer and purchasers of health care, the State will need to increase transparency of health care information - The health care system should make available to patients and their families and health care purchasers reliable information that enables them to make informed decisions when selecting a health plan, hospital, or clinical practice, or when choosing among alternative treatments. Price and quality information about hospitals, physicians, health plans and treatment options must become widely available.

Third, Connecticut must make a commitment to fact-based policy analysis. Public policy makers need credible information and better tools to inform decision-making. Effective governments and high performance organizations use data to inform decision-making and to drive performance.

- Connecticut should establish and fund a Connecticut Center for Health Information and Policy Analysis.
- The Connecticut Center for Health Information and Policy Analysis would establish a comprehensive health information system to provide for the collection, compilation, coordination, analysis, indexing, dissemination, and utilization of health related data and statistics.

Fourth, recognize that expanded access to health care must be coupled with improvements in the quality and safety of the health care system. Poor quality care has undermined patient outcomes and added billions of unnecessary costs to the health care system.

- Connecticut should strive for health coverage that is universal, continuous, affordable to individuals and families, affordable and sustainable for society, and that enhances health and well being.
- Connecticut should review existing programs to identify barriers to enrollment and access to health care.
- Connecticut should undertake a dispassionate, careful, and transparent examination of current mandated health insurance benefits.
- Connecticut should promote quality and safety. Health providers should be given incentives to implement practices that evidence shows can work to reduce or prevent adverse events and medical errors.
- Connecticut must actively promote evidence based care with an emphasis prevention of disease and illness and management of chronic disease.
- Connecticut should promote increased use of health information technology and make sure that these systems are able to communicate using an open architecture and embracing the principle of interoperability.
- Connecticut must build capacity of the regional higher education system to graduate more qualified allied health professionals.

The health care crisis creates the opportunity for the State of Connecticut and its business community to work together to make sure our state has the best access to the safest, most affordable, high quality health care. The solutions to the health care crisis will require leadership and sustained efforts on the part of all stakeholders. We ask the Governor and the Legislature to convene a Healthy Connecticut Summit that will develop the blueprint for comprehensive health care reform and an on-going process to sustain reform efforts such as creation of a Connecticut Health Care Reform Study Group.

There is much work to be done. It is time for Connecticut to get started.