Connecticut State Medical Society Testimony on Various Proposed Legislation
presented to the Public Health Committee
February 26, 2007

Senator Handley, Representative Sayers and members of the Public Health Committee, on behalf of the over 7,000 member of the Connecticut State Medical Society (CSMS) thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony to you on proposed legislation before you today. Several bills before you during this hearing will have an impact on physicians and the delivery of healthcare in this state. For this reason, we offer the following comment on various bills on your agenda.

House Bill 6109 An Act Reducing Licensure Renewal Fees for Retired Dentists-CSMS respectfully asks that this legislation be amended to included retired physicians. Connecticut has the dubious distinction of having one of the highest licensure fees in the country at $450. We also know the Connecticut has a large population of retired physicians, many of whom contact us on a regular basis about the possibility of providing volunteer or pro bono services to Connecticut’s underserved populations. However, we are continually told by these physicians that the cost of a $450 license to provide free services is prohibitive.

House Bill 5512 An Act establishing a Bulk Purchasing Influenza Vaccine Pilot Program-CSMS strongly supports this legislation. Each year it becomes harder and harder for physicians to obtain required doses of the influenza vaccine as large clinics and retailers, driven by profit, gobble up already limited quantities of the vaccine with enormous orders. In many cases, physicians are unable to provide the vaccine to patients with the highest risk simply because they are unable to obtain the vaccine. Often, these patients are forced pay for the vaccination that would otherwise be provided at no cost through their insurer or, what is worse will not receive the vaccination at all.

Due to the prevalence of the problem, several County Medical Societies have taken on the task of surveying their members to identify the severity. Attached to this testimony is survey summary information from the Fairfield, Hartford, and New Haven County medical societies that demonstrates that there is a significant problem. You will notice in all three counties, the small percentage of physicians who received their vaccines for this year’s flu season within the most advantageous time frame.
House Bill 258 An Act Prohibiting the Use of Trans Fat in Connecticut Food Service Establishments- Promoting healthy lifestyles is one of the most cost effective ways to reduce healthcare costs. In general, physicians in this state and throughout the country support the elimination of Trans fats in the foods we prepare and consume. While we understand the impact an abrupt and complete immediate prohibition can have on many business and industries in Connecticut efforts should be undertaken to educate our citizens about the dangers of trans fat and to remove trans fats from food.

Senate Bill 89 An Act Establishing a State-wide System of Primary Care Health Clinics- Throughout the entire discussion this session on providing universal access to health care services for all Connecticut residents, CSMS has remained consistent in our position that prevention must be the foundation of any system. We are encouraged by proposals such as Senate Bill 89 that recognizes the importance of primary care. However, we must caution that it is imperative that the physician community be included in the development of a primary care system and the establishment of any primary care clinic. Primary care clinics cannot stand alone and must be tied into a continuum to care for all of the patients need. As we have seen in certain “retail” model clinics that provide solely what could be considered primary care services, patients are not served well by a health care setting that acts as a silo unto its own will no access to the entire health care system.

House Bill 6332 An Act Increasing Access to Health Care- CSMS respectfully requests the committee to take no action on this bill. While efforts to increase health insurance coverage are laudable, the legislation before you would allow health insurers to make available health plans that do not provide coverage for services this committee and the General Assembly deemed necessary to require through state statute. These requirements were put in place to promote prevention and the provision of medically necessary care. Please oppose House Bill 6332.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony to you today.