



**Testimony of Victoria Veltri, Acting State Healthcare Advocate
Before the Human Resources Committee
In Support of S.B. 9, S.B. 103, and S.B. 128
February 10, 2011**

Good afternoon Senator Musto, Representative Tercyak, Senator Markley, Representative Gibbons and members of the Human Services Committee. For the record, I am Victoria Veltri, the Acting State Healthcare Advocate. My office, the Office of the Healthcare Advocate (OHA) is an independent state agency with a three-fold mission: assuring managed care consumers have access to medically necessary healthcare; educating consumers about their rights and responsibilities under health insurance plans; and, informing you of problems consumers face in accessing care and proposing solutions to those problems.

I testify today on behalf of OHA in support of three bills, S.B. 9, S.B. 103, and S.B. 128. Each of these bills offers an important solution to a problem in our healthcare system, and I ask for your consideration for each of these pieces of legislation.

S.B. 9, AN ACT CONCERNING MEDICAID ELIGIBILITY, would increase the Medicaid income eligibility level and expand the number of low-income people who have access to Medicaid. This bill is designed to help people who currently make too much to qualify for Medicaid, yet too little to afford private health insurance. By allowing these individuals to enroll in Medicaid, this bill would begin to alleviate many of the problems that exist under the current health insurance system. These problems include insurance premiums that are too high for low-income individuals to afford, and structures that make it difficult for low-income individuals to increase their income for fearing of becoming ineligible for Medicaid. These problems are important to address, and S.B. 9 is an important step forward in this process.

OHA also supports S.B. 103, AN ACT CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF PODIATRY SERVICES UNDER THE MEDICAID PROGRAM. Podiatry is an important medical specialty that can greatly benefit patients; this bill would allow Medicaid enrollees access to this vital field of healthcare. Given the value of podiatry to overall health it is essential that Medicaid patients have access to these services.

S.B. 128, AN ACT CONCERNING EXPANSION OF THE CONNPACE APPLICATION PERIOD, is also an important piece of legislation that OHA supports. This bill would require the Department of Social Services to accept applications for

ConnPACE throughout the year, allowing more people easier access to this valuable program. Limiting enrollment in ConnPACE to certain time periods unfairly and unnecessarily deters eligible individuals from utilizing this program. ConnPACE is designed to assist some of our more vulnerable healthcare populations; for this reason it is especially important to ensure that ConnPACE enrollment is easy and open.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today in support of S.B. 9, S.B. 103, and S.B. 128. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.