



**Testimony of Victoria Veltri, Acting State Healthcare Advocate
Before the Public Health Committee
In Support of H.B. 5608
March 2, 2011**

Good afternoon Senator Stillman, Representative Ritter, Senator Welch, Representative Perillo and members of the Public Health 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 am happy today to testify in support of H.B. 5608. This bill provides a necessary, positive change to Connecticut's health system, and I ask for your consideration of this important piece of legislation.

H.B. 5608, An Act Concerning the Implementation of Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Standards in Health Care Settings (CLAS), would establish a collaborative committee to ensure the implementation of, and compliance with, the CLAS mandates issued by the United States Department of Health and Human Services. This goal would be achieved by requiring the Commission on Health Equity to, with input from other agencies, establish a committee with representatives from various health care entities. The CLAS guidelines provide patients with access to important, necessary linguistic services in health care settings, and it is essential that these mandates be implemented and monitored in an appropriate, effective way. OHA believes that the Commission on Health Equity, with its experience in addressing health disparities and health needs in vulnerable populations, is an excellent choice to take on this task. OHA has worked closely with the Commission on Health Equity, and the Commission is housed in OHA for administrative purposes only.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 5608. If you have any questions concerning this testimony, please contact me at victoria.veltri@ct.gov or (860) 297-3982.