

Public Health Committee

Public Testimony of Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)

H.B. 5500: An Act Concerning The Department of Public Health's Recommendations Regarding Various Revisions To The Public Health Statutes

S.B. 476: An Act Concerning The Office of Health Strategy's Recommendations Regarding Various Revisions To Community Benefits Programs Administered By Hospitals

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March 28, 2022

The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) is a statewide nonprofit that advocates for and empowers women and girls in Connecticut, especially those who are underserved or marginalized. For forty-eight years, CWEALF has been a leading advocate for policies that advance the economic security of women across our state and promote gender equity.

Through CWEALF's Legal Education Program, we provide information, education, referrals, and bilingual advocacy to the Connecticut community to ensure that all individuals in our state have access to legal justice. The majority of CWEALF's clients are low-income women with at least one dependent.

We urge the committee to support H.B. 5500. Doulas are an essential part of the birthing and parenting process for many parents and families. A doula is a trained, nonmedical professional who provides much more than physical support throughout a pregnancy, but also offers emotional and informational support before, during and after birth. Doulas assist in providing a safe, memorable and empowering experience for the pregnant person and their new baby. Connecticut needs to support parents and families welcoming new babies into their lives, and voting favorably for H.B. 5500 will help us do just that.

CWEALF also supports S.B. 476 because equitable, transparent, and accessible community benefit programs are crucial to the overall well being of our communities throughout the state. S.B. 476 will promote reporting on health disparities including outcomes, will standardize reporting for community health needs assessments, implementation plans, and community benefit programs, will require the Office of Health Strategy to make reports available to the public, and will require hospitals to explain how community benefit spending addresses health equity and needs identified by their communities, amongst many other important key responsibilities.

As the COVID-19 pandemic recedes and Connecticut begins its focus on recovery efforts, we must improve our current infrastructures and systems to ensure that all residents are given the resources they need to take care of their health. Equitable and reliable healthcare is extremely important for the communities we serve, the recovery efforts we are putting in motion, and future prosperity for our state.

We urge the Committee to vote favorably on H.B. 5500 and S.B. 476 to collectively work towards improving Connecticut's health care infrastructure.