



Connecticut Chapter

Media contact: **Audrey Honig Geragosian**  
Director of Communications  
[audreyhg@csms.org](mailto:audreyhg@csms.org)  
Main: 203 / 865-0587 x110  
Mobile: 860 / 906-8037  
Hartford: 860 / 524-9055

For immediate release  
March 8, 2011

## Physicians outraged over Sustinet changes

*Legislation that hurts Connecticut physicians hurts Connecticut patients*

The Connecticut State Medical Society, the Connecticut Chapter of the American College of Physicians, the Connecticut Academy of Family Physicians and the Connecticut Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics today expressed outrage that the legislature's Public Health Committee removed critical medical liability protection from HB 6305, known as the Sustinet legislation. Together, these four organizations represent the vast majority of primary-care physicians in Connecticut.

"For three years, physicians have worked closely with advocates to craft Sustinet legislation that would increase access to medical care for Connecticut patients. At every step along the way, lawmakers have ignored a major issue that is driving our physician shortage and increasing wait times at offices across our state: medical liability," said David S. Katz, MD, CSMS president. "We have been very clear that if physicians in the program are required to adhere to special guidelines – which physicians must be part of developing – they also have to be afforded medical liability protection."

Only one of the nine members of the Sustinet Board was a physician, yet the group specifically re-inserted the medical liability provisions into the draft legislation it produced (HB 6305).

"Removing the 'safe harbor' for physicians who participate in Sustinet is an incredible barrier to having primary-care physicians participate," said Robert McLean, MD, governor of ACP in Connecticut. "Without an adequate supply of physicians willing to see this expanded pool of patients, our patients are the ones who will suffer, with longer wait times and less choice of physicians."

"While the Sustinet bill does advance the development of the 'medical home' in Connecticut, no health care reform can be complete without addressing the issue of medical liability and the cost of defensive medicine," said Robert Carr, MD, president of CAFP.

(more)

## **Physicians outraged over Sustinet changes**

(cont'd)

Currently, physicians employed by the state and the federal government as well as in federally qualified health centers have certain liability protections not afforded to privately practicing physicians who provide the majority of patient care in Connecticut. The CSMS 2009 Primary Care Survey indicated that 25% of family physicians and 22% of internists were contemplating a career change because of the practice environment in Connecticut. The same study showed existing patients waiting between 7 and 15 days for an appointment to see a primary-care physician.

Together, these four medical societies urged lawmakers to recall the amendment and allow the Sustinet legislation to go through the legislative process as it was initially drafted. Leaders of the organizations anticipate they will issue formal support or opposition to the modified bill imminently.