



For Immediate Release

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Office of the Healthcare Advocate Launches *CT Speaks Out!* Consumer Focused Series on Healthcare Affordability

It's time to speak up and speak out about rapidly growing healthcare costs and its effect on your family. You'll have a guaranteed audience too. The Connecticut Office of Healthcare Advocate (OHA) has created the **CT Speaks Out!** listening series to gather consumer stories on the issue of affordability of healthcare.

“The price of healthcare is too high. The ‘affordable’ part of the Affordable Care Act has had far too little discussion and attention at a time when we know consumers are being monumentally stressed by rapidly rising costs that are out of their direct control,” said Healthcare Advocate Ted Doolittle.



Affordability of services, prescriptions and health insurance premiums and cost shares (deductibles, co-pays, *etc.*) remains a fundamental and elusive challenge in creating a healthcare system that best serves us all.

In an effort to better understand these challenges and to help inform effective policy solutions for these issues, the OHA in partnership with other local advocacy organizations is convening a state-wide series of listening sessions to gather your stories, discuss your ideas on how to reduce costs, and to discuss together questions about healthcare costs in our state.

How You Can Participate

We want to hear from you! Your stories, experiences and ideas are critical to Connecticut's ability to develop effective policy that addresses the needs and challenges that we face in our healthcare system.

The next CT Speaks Out! Forum is:

Wednesday, November 15, 2017

6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Generations Family Health Center

40 Mansfield Ave.

Willimantic, CT 06226

(Local Co-Sponsor: Community Health Center Assoc. of CT & Generations Family Health Center)

Between 2006 and 2015, the average portion of an individual's income that goes towards paying health insurance premiums and deductibles increased from 6.5% to 10.1%, and this trend continues to increase.^[i] In 2015, Connecticut employees paid the highest average annual premium in the nation.

This is unsustainable.

Although Connecticut has a robust insurance premium rate review process (learn more about this process [here](#)) that seeks to ensure that insurance premiums are appropriate, the Department of Insurance is limited by statute in the factors it can consider when approving health insurance rates. Affordability is not one of the factors the Department has considered to date.

“We believe that the high cost of health insurance, as well as the underlying issue of the high cost of services and drugs, are matters of great public importance. Both should be discussed transparently and with opportunities for formal public input by you, the consumer,” said Doolittle.

One of the goals of this initiative is to gather data about the importance of affordability in order to support policy change regarding the underlying high cost of healthcare, whether that means adding considerations of affordability to the insurance rate review process, or developing some other mechanism elsewhere or structure to create transparency and accountability on the actual price of healthcare and drugs.

There is plenty of free parking as there will be at all the other forums across the state. You can find an updated listing of where, when and details of the listening forums here: [CT Speaks Out!](#) (Full URL: <http://www.ct.gov/oha/cso>)

Also, use the same link above if you plan to attend a session and wish to pre-register or to report your story and fill out our surveys before you arrive -- both of which are appreciated, but not required.

Consumers who need assistance can call 1-866-466-4446, or e-mail OHA at healthcare.advocate@ct.gov.

For general information, Doolittle recommends that consumers visit OHA at www.ct.gov/oha, at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/State-of-Connecticut-Office-of-the-Healthcare-Advocate/301102456997?ref=hl> and on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/user/stateofctoaha> and Twitter @State_of_CT_OHA .

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