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To Senator Crisco, Representative Megna, Senator Kelly, Representative Sampson, and Members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee:

Testimony on Acupuncture Bill HB5359 Matthew Maneggia, LAc.

I have been in practice as a Licensed Acupuncturist in the State of Connecticut since 2007, and have been accepting insurance since 2012.

The issue of parity of providers is that insurance plans presently cover only MDs and DCs on an in-network basis for acupuncture with a major exception, namely, Cigna. Other insurance companies still exclude licensed acupuncturists from the list of in-network providers.

Therefore, other providers such as MDs and DCs join the networks through their respective professions for which insurance coverage is mandated, and then offer acupuncture services to which the members of the health plan are referred.

A good example of the parity problem can be illustrated by the case of a patient who recently started treatment at my office. Unfortunately this is a very typical case. I advised her to request an in-network exception from her insurance provider in which they would cover her at the in-network rate even though we, as Licensed Acupuncturists are locked out of her network. Happily, through a great deal of patience and persistence on her part, including six phone calls over the course of multiple hours, my patient did receive an exception. However, it is comparatively rare to receive this exception. In many cases people spend a significant amount of time and energy fruitlessly. They are either forced to make up the difference in coverage out of pocket, choose to visit a different network provider (MD, DC), or in many cases just give up on seeking acupuncture treatment altogether.

This all-too-familiar scenario applies to all employees with in-network plans that cover acupuncture with exclusion of Cigna. It is a simple matter of fairness and patient choice of access that can be easily remedied by the passage of this bill.