

INDEPENDENT CONSUMER ADVOCATES' POSITION ON SIM ISSUE BRIEF #4- PRIMARY CARE PRACTICES AND ADVANCED GROUPS AND NETWORKS

The brief proposes using SIM grant funds to provide resources and assistance, primarily to safety net providers, for community integration of Advanced Medical Homes (AMHs) with social service partners in communities. Advocates are supportive of this concept, particularly if, as the proposal develops, SIM follows the successful example of other states such as Vermont's Blueprint for Health.

We would suggest that these resources not be limited to only small to mid-sized practices, but be available to patients of every Connecticut practice. While large practices may have the resources to integrate care with community resources, they often do not have the local connections to make that integration successful. We also suggest that the state make clear expectations that all payers will share in the costs and support for community integration.

Introductory remarks in the brief appear to make the assumption that Connecticut's health system is accelerating toward consolidation and the brief makes clear that SIM intends to facilitate that trend. This is unwise. First, there is scant evidence given of the trend. Provider practices in Connecticut are disproportionately small and have enjoyed a very independent culture historically. This contention is more consistent with corporate cultural foundations -than premised on any real-world, Connecticut-based community health experience. But even if SIM's predictions are correct, it is not clear that consolidation in markets is favorable to preserving smaller practices for either quality or -cost of care. Anti-trust concerns are already large and growing in Connecticut's hospital environment and national evidence on the quality or cost benefits of Accountable Care Organizations is mixed at best. It would be unwise for SIM to advocate or facilitate consolidation of Connecticut's health care system.ⁱ

ⁱ It is important to note the difference between the benefits of integration across the system and consolidation, which involves corporate ties.