

Our View: Care centers invaluable to communities

Norwich Bulletin Editorial

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Everyday we see yet another example of the struggles Eastern Connecticut families are facing, and the increasing demand being put on social service agencies. The latest example came this week with the opening of a new health clinic in Griswold.

United Community & Family Services in Norwich opened the clinic Monday after noticing a yearly rise in the number of patients from Griswold visiting the Norwich facility. More than 700 Griswold residents came to the clinic just last year alone. The new facility will make it easier for the Griswold clients to continue receiving the care they need.

These patients, many of whom have jobs but simply cannot afford adequate health care coverage for themselves or their families, rely on the federally funded health center for their medical needs. But more importantly, the services being provided are preventative care measures in many cases — preventative care that can help individuals avoid more serious illnesses from developing.

If it were not for facilities such as UCFS, too many Eastern Connecticut families would have no options other emergency room visits for illnesses that could have been prevented, further straining an already overburdened health care system.

There are dozens of social service agencies operating in Eastern Connecticut, offering a wide variety of programs and services for thousands of needy residents. Most of these agencies rely upon the state for financial assistance. Yet, like many of their clients, these agencies also are feeling the effects of rising costs and decreasing government aid.

Earlier this week, the General Assembly held a public hearing on a proposed bill calling for \$200 million in state aid for community-based human service providers. The “rescue fund” is aimed at stabilizing the system and providing the capital improvements needed to meet a growing demand.

These community-based groups provide a critical service to our region and our neighbors. But for years, they have been under-funded. Next fiscal year’s state budget provides no increase for these agencies.

We urge legislators to look favorably on the proposed legislation that will enable these agencies to continue to provide these services. The potential loss of the agencies and their services would be far more costly in the long run — both in terms of dollars and sense.