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## **Medical and Dental Assistants at Hartford Community Health Center “Join Forces with Our Physicians and Nurses”**

*Health aides employed by Community Health Services, Inc. (CHS) vote to form their own union, commit to collaborate with management for better patient outcomes*

**Hartford** - Medical and dental assistants at the federally qualified health center (FQHC) that serves the capitol region yesterday voted for collective bargaining representation in a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)-supervised election. The employees cast their ballots three weeks after a majority of the unit sought voluntary recognition of their free choice to form a union from Community Health Services, Inc. (CHS).

"My decision to vote 'Union Yes' was about making sure our patients keep getting the care they need," said Monique Davis, a women's health medical assistant with nine years of patient care experience at CHS. "Now we can join forces with our physicians and nurses to take on issues like high turn-over and wage disparities," added Davis, a member of the CHS United organizing committee.

Davis' comments refer to the vote bringing the 26-member unit into AFT Connecticut, which since 2013 has represented CHS' licensed medical practitioners at both its Hartford and Windsor clinics. The labor federation also represents nurses and caregivers at acute care facilities, public schools and home health service providers across the state.

"We voted 'Yes' three years ago to improve our relationship with management," said Irv Buchbinder, a board certified podiatrist who has worked at CHS for 15 years. "Having a union is about more than winning better wages and benefits. It's also about working together to make improvements in patient care," added Buchbinder, who also serves as president of Licensed Professionals at Community Health Services (LPACHS), AFT Local 5151.

Buchbinder's comments refer to the historic 2013 vote by CHS' doctors, dentists and nurses to form their union, the first in many years representing private sector physicians in Connecticut. The licensed practitioners have for months actively supported the efforts of their medical and dental assistant colleagues to unionize, as well.

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Jan Hochadel

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“When caregivers are treated well and have a voice in their workplace, it improves the quality of care,” said AFT Connecticut President Jan Hochadel. “These hard-working women and men understood that choosing ‘Union Yes’ was their way to have a seat at the table in decisions impacting patient outcomes. Yesterday’s vote is as much a win for the community as it is for the medical and dental assistants who have united with us,” added Hochadel.

Hochadel’s comments refer to findings in a 2014 Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA) report on improved performance in health settings where frontline caregivers have won collective bargaining rights. The authors of “Nurse Unions and Patient Outcomes,” recently published by Cornell University’s Industrial and Labor Relations School, concluded that successful organizing drives yielded better care for patients.

*AFT Connecticut, the largest union of acute care hospital workers in the state, represents approximately 50 physicians and caregivers at Community Health Services, Inc. (CHS) in Hartford and Windsor. For more information, visit [www.aftct.org](http://www.aftct.org) or follow the labor federation on Twitter at [@AFTCT](https://twitter.com/AFTCT) and on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/aftct](https://www.facebook.com/aftct).*

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Links --

AFT Connecticut Video: “CHS United: Victory for Patient Care in Hartford”  
<https://youtu.be/qYW4sMeTkLc>

ILR Review: “Nurse Unions and Patient Outcomes”  
<http://ilr.sagepub.com/content/early/2016/04/20/0019793916644251.abstract>