



February 19, 2020

*Written testimony of William E. White, President, Beechwood Post Acute & Transitional Care Regarding the Governor's Recommended FY 2020 and FY 2021 Proposed Budget*

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Bill White. I am the Administrator and President at Beechwood Post Acute & Transitional Care in New London, Connecticut. Beechwood is family owned and operated and has been providing nursing home care in our community for over 64 years. We are a 60-bed nursing home, and we have over 100 employees working at our facility.

I want to begin by thanking the Appropriations Committee for supporting increases in last session's budget for nursing home wage and benefit increases for our employees. Recruiting and retaining workers in Connecticut's very competitive labor market remains our most significant challenge. Having enough quality workers to meet the needs of nursing home residents with increasing care needs on all shifts will even be more challenging as the Connecticut minimum wage continues to rise. These new wage enhancement dollars help in this ongoing struggle to assure quality care in our nursing home.

I'm the administrator, but the devoted caregivers I work with, RNs, LPNs, CNAs, etc... all want what I want---that is to deliver the highest quality care experience to anyone who comes to Beechwood. My co-workers are doing an exceptional job, and I am so grateful to them, and proud of them, for everything they are doing. Beechwood is a 5-star nursing home, a US News & World Report national quality award winner, and consistent winner of multiple "best of" awards – all due to the work of our fine staff.

I am especially proud of the work our nursing home has done during a long period where Connecticut hasn't made nursing home funding a priority.

I fear that Beechwood continues to sit on a fiscal tipping point in 2020. Major changes are being developed called "Case Mix" which will change the way Medicaid reimburses our family owned nursing home this year. While we in concept agree with Case Mix and how it reimburses nursing homes based on the care

needs, or acuity, of the residents, our nursing home is afraid that the new Case Mix payments will ignore the Medicaid funding shortfalls during the long dark period of the past decade, and that quality will suffer with insufficient resources absent the injection of revenue that we have long deserved.

Yourselves and your peers, our elected representatives, need to hear loud and clear that delivering the care everyone wants for their loved ones is getting harder and harder to provide. And the reason isn't really hard to understand---there has been almost no additional Medicaid help in the state budget for over thirteen (13) years. To give you a frame of reference, my youngest daughter is in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. There has been no significant increase since she was born.

Elected leaders need to hear that the nursing home population is older and sicker than it has ever been. We see so much more dementia in our population than ever before. Our patients and residents of today also have greater behavioral health needs-----mental health and substance use disorders are common on top of usual and customary skilled nursing needs.

It is really beyond my ability to understand how our nursing home can compete to retain or recruit staff to serve a more complex population with unemployment so low without more Medicaid help. Please help us deliver the care we all want and please make long overdue nursing home funding a priority in this year's budget.

On behalf of my family and everyone at Beechwood, thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.