



February 19, 2020

*Written testimony of Joel Carmichael, Administrator, of CountrySide Manor of Bristol, Concerning the Governor's Recommended FY 2020 and FY 2021 Proposed Budget*

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and to the members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Joel Carmichael. I am the Administrator at CountrySide Manor of Bristol located in Bristol CT. CountrySide has been providing nursing home care in our community for well over 40 years. We are a 90-bed nursing home, and we have over 180 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 one of our major challenges. Having an ample supply of 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 continue to rise. Please know these new wage enhancement dollars will help in this ongoing struggle to assure quality care in our nursing home. Staffing is our number one concern

In this regard, I want you to know how proud I am to be here representing CountrySide Manor. I'm the administrator, but these devoted caregivers, all want to deliver the highest quality care experience to anyone who comes to CountrySide Manor. And these workers are doing an amazing job. At every discharge and once a year we send out resident satisfaction surveys. I'm very proud to say that 99% of our residents and or families felt that the C.N.A's were very competent and 98% felt the nurses were very competent. But Delivering this care is harder and harder to provide in Connecticut. The reason is simple, there has been almost no additional Medicaid help in the state budget for now over a decade, but our resident population is older and sicker than it was twenty years ago. Today's nursing home resident also have greater behavioral health needs and substance use disorders that are now very common, and that is on top of their already complicated skilled nursing needs that brought them to us in the first place.

Case Mix could be an answer, but only if the funding shortfall is addressed.

With staffing being our number 1 challenge, I fear that Countryside Manor is at a critical juncture in 2020. Major changes are being developed called “Case Mix” will change the way Medicaid reimburses our nursing home this year. While we in concept agree with Case Mix and how it reimburses nursing homes base 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 of the past decade, and that quality will suffer with insufficient resources.

Now it is your turn. 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 everyone at Countryside Manor, thank you and I would like invite any of our policy makers to visit us at any point in time.