

**FOX HILL CENTER-GENESIS HEALTHCARE
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***Written testimony of Stephanie Vitko-Aniolek, Center Executive Director, Fox Hill Center
Concerning the Governor's Recommended FY 2020 AND FY 2021 Proposed Budget.***

Good Morning Senator Champagne and Representative Winkler and to the members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Stephanie V Aniolek and am the Executive Director of the Fox Hill Center in Vernon, CT. We have been providing care to the Vernon community for over fifty years. We are a 120-bed skilled nursing facility, and have over 100 employees working at our center.

I wanted to say thank-you to the Appropriations Committee for supporting the increases in last session's budget for nursing home wage and benefit increases for our employees. Recruiting and retaining workers in CT's very competitive labor market remains one of our major challenges. Having an ample supply of qualified workers to meet the needs of our residents with an increasing level of care on all shifts will make a bigger challenge as the Connecticut minimum wage continues to rise. Please know these new wage enhancement dollars will help in the ongoing struggle to assure quality care in our nursing center.

Although I am the Executive Director at Fox Hill, we have devoted caregivers from licensed nurses, certified nursing assistants, Social Worker's, Maintenance, Therapy Directors and other Administrative professionals who want quality of care for the people we serve when they come to Fox. These people work hard and I am grateful for how hard they work everyday. Fox Hill was just awarded 4 stars for Quality Measures as recognized by CMS.

Nursing Homes continue to be financially fragile in 2020. Major changes are being developed called "case mix" that will change the way Medicaid reimburses our facility. While we agree with case mix and how it reimburses our home based on the care needs, our facility is very concerned the new Case Mix payments will ignore the Medicaid Funding shortfalls of the past decade, and that quality will suffer with insufficient resources.

Our elected officials representing our residents, staff and families need to be aware that delivering quality care is getting difficult in Connecticut. Our employees know this very well. The reason is not hard to understand. There has been almost no additional Medicaid help in the state budget for over a decade, but our population is older and sicker. Alzheimer's and dementia is on the rise, creating complex social issues and living arrangements. Many of these people will require placement in SNF's. Behavioral needs and substance abuse is on the rise and are ending up in skilled facilities. This adds different concerns and demands on our staff's ability to take care of another population while taking care of the other older adults. Cae Mix could be the answer, but only if the funding shortfall is addressed.

Please help us deliver the quality care we all want and please make the long overdue nursing home funding a priority in this year's budget.I can be reached at 860-875-0771 if you have any questions.

Stephanie Vitko-Aniolek
Center Executive Director-Fox Hill Center

