



February 19, 2020

*Written testimony of Janet Shahan, Administrator, Gardner Heights Health Care Center 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 Janet Shahan and I am the Administrator at Gardner Heights Health Care Center, in Shelton, Connecticut. Gardner Heights Health Care Center has been providing nursing home care in our community for 45 years. We are a 130 bed nursing home, and we have 155 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 continues to rise. Please know these new wage enhancement dollars will help in this ongoing struggle to assure quality care in our nursing home.

I'm the administrator, but these devoted caregivers, from RNs, LPNs, CNAs, etc. all want what I want---that is to deliver the highest quality care experience to anyone who comes to Gardner Heights Health Care Center.. And these workers are doing an amazing job, and I am so grateful to them, and proud of them, for everything they are doing. Our readmission rate to hospitals is lower than the national average, and residents going home with services are educated by their home care services that they can return to the facility, as long as there is not a life threatening emergency. We recently received an award from ACHA NCAL which was a Certificate of Achievement for Quality Initiative Recognition Program for improving the lives that we serve.

I fear that our nursing home continues to be 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.



Policy makers, Legislators need to know delivering the care everyone wants for their loved ones is getting harder and harder to provide in Connecticut. Our employees know this very well. The reason isn't really hard to understand---there has been almost no additional Medicaid help in the state budget for now over a decade, but the nursing home population is older and sicker than it was twenty years ago. We see so much more dementia and Alzheimer's disease than ever before. Today's nursing home resident also have greater behavioral health needs-----mental health and substance use disorders are common on top of the skilled nursing care that today's nursing home residents need. Case Mix could be an answer, but only if the funding shortfall is addressed.

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 Gardner Heights Health Care Center, thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janet Shahan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Janet" being more prominent than the last name "Shahan".

Janet Shahan RN, MBA, NHA

Administrator

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