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*Written testimony of Giovanna Griffin, Senior Center Executive Director, Meriden 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 Giovanna Griffin and I am the Senior Center Executive Director at Meriden Center in Meriden, Connecticut. Meriden Center has been providing nursing home care in our community for over thirty years. We are a 130-bed skilled nursing home, and we have over 100 employee working at our center.

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.

Although I am the Meriden Center Administrator, we have devoted caregivers, from RNs, LPNs, CNAs, Social Workers, Recreation Therapy Directors, Administrative Staff, Maintenance Staff, etc...who want what I want----that is to deliver the highest quality care experience to anyone who comes to Meriden Center. These workers do an amazing job, and I am so grateful to them, and proud of them, for everything they are doing. Meriden Center has 4 stars for Quality Measures as recognized by CMS.

I fear that our nursing home continues to be financially fragile in 2020. Major changes are being developed called "Case Mix" that will change the way Medicaid reimburses our nursing home this year. While we 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 of the past decade, and that quality will suffer with insufficient resources.

Our elected officials representing our residents, patients and staff need to know that 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 is not 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 as well as complex social situations that require placement in nursing homes. 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 Meriden Center, thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Most sincerely,

*Giovanna Griffin*

Giovanna A. Griffin  
Senior Center Executive Director