



NORTHBRIDGE Health Care Center
your bridge to health

February 19, 2020

Written testimony of Erica Roman, Administrator, Northbridge 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 Erica Roman. I am Administrator, at Northbridge Health Care Center in Bridgeport, CT. Northbridge has been providing nursing home care in our community for 35 years. We are a 145-bed nursing home, and we have 250 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.

Unfortunately, I would love to have the Northbridge CNAs and nursing staff here with me, but many of them work two jobs and weren't able to make it this evening. I met with them prior to coming today and asked what message they would want me to send. The theme I gathered from listening to them was that all they truly want is to deliver the highest quality care experience to anyone who comes to Northbridge. And these workers are doing an amazing job, and I am so grateful to them, and proud of them, for everything they are doing. Based on that hard work and dedication, Northbridge was given the honor of receiving the 2018 Bronze "Commitment to Quality" Award. Then, in 2019, Northbridge received the next level of Quality Awards, the Silver "Achievement in Quality" National Award. This award is directly correlated to the compassionate, quality care that the Northbridge staff gives to the residents every day.

Although Northbridge is achieving excellent outcomes, 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 must acknowledge that delivering the care everyone wants for their loved ones is becoming nearly impossible 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 Northbridge, thank you for taking your time to read this testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Erica Roman

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