



SILVER SPRINGS
CARE CENTER

February 19, 2020

***Written testimony of Raymond Hackling, Administrator, Silver Springs 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 Ray Hackling. I am Administrator of Silver Springs Care Center in Meriden, Connecticut. Silver Springs has been providing nursing home care in our community for over 40 years. We are a 159-bed nursing home, and we have over 200 employee's 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.

In this regard, I want you to know how proud I am to be part of this great organization. I'm the Administrator, but our devoted caregivers, from RN's to LPN's to CNA's to Housekeeping and Dietary staff all want what I want----that is to deliver the highest quality care experience to anyone who comes to Silver Springs. These workers are doing an amazing job, and I am so grateful to them, and proud of them, for everything they are doing. In 2019 Silver Springs Care Center was one of only 3 nursing homes in Connecticut to receive the AHCA Silver Award, this is a very distinguished national award. In 2018, one of our nurses was awarded the National Certified Dementia Practitioner of the Year Award. Silver Springs is also a CMS 5-Star rated facility. We are proud to bring these national honors to Connecticut.

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I fear that our nursing home continues to be at a critical juncture in 2020. Major changes are being developed called “Case Mix” that 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.

This Case Mix matter is of particular importance to me and my facility because we were 98 percent occupied for 2019 with 86 percent of our residents on state Medicaid. For 2020 YTD we are over 99% occupied, actually being completely full and having no bed availability for 75 % of the days in the year. We have been unable to accept any residents from the two facilities that are currently closing in the state forcing some of these patients to be relocated very far from their current facilities and families. Many of my residents suffer from medical problems that are combined with either behavioral or substance use issues or both. At Silver Springs have a 60-bed Behavioral Unit that is almost always full. We also provide Substance Use Disorder counseling through our iRecovery Program, which are unique services found in the Greater Meriden area. We average 18-20 residents that attend this counseling consistently. It’s important that whatever system is implemented provides adequate reimbursement for efficient high occupancy and high Medicaid utilization facilities and appropriately reimburses for residents with behavioral health or substance use issues. I know that other states like Massachusetts have implemented special reimbursement for high occupancy, high Medicaid utilization and Behavioral Health to ensure access to appropriate care. It is my understanding that the system being developed by Connecticut does not have a way of properly scoring or tracking patients with behavioral or substance abuse issues. This flaw will lead to cutting rates and services for this very vulnerable population unless it is addressed.

Please help us deliver the care we all want and please make long overdue nursing home funding and well-designed Case Mix a priority in this year’s budget.

On behalf of everyone at Silver Springs Care Center, thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Raymond Hackling, LNHA

Administrator