



February 19, 2020

*Written testimony of John Zazzaro, Administrator, at Touchpoints at Farmington 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 John Zazzaro. I am the Administrator at Touchpoints at Farmington in Farmington, Connecticut. Touchpoints at Farmington has been providing nursing home care in our community for 19 years. We are a 105 bed nursing home, and we have 170 employee 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 here with some of the key people from Touchpoints at Farmington. I'm the administrator, but these devoted caregivers, from RNs, LPNs, CNAs, to all non-clinical staff, all want what I want----that is to deliver the highest quality care experience to anyone who comes to Touchpoints at Farmington. And these workers are doing an amazing job, and I am so grateful to them, and proud of them, for everything they are doing. Because of all the hard work the staff is doing we have recently been selected to join the post-acute network for Hartford Hospital and Saint Francis Hospital affiliates. Our devoted staff takes care of some of the most compromised residents who require advanced IV therapy, such as Milrinone and Dobutamine drips as well as other advanced nursing practices.

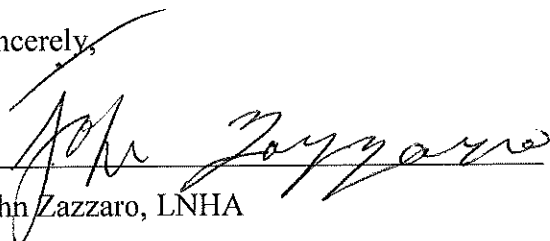
I fear that our nursing home continues to be at a critical juncture in 2020. Major changes are being developed called "Case Mix" will change the way Medicaid reimburses our nursing home this year. While we in concept agree with Case Mix and how it reimburses nursing homes base on the care needs, or acuity, 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.

Elected leaders 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 Touchpoints at Farmington, thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Zazzaro", written over a horizontal line.

John Zazzaro, LNHA

Administrator for Touchpoints at Farmington