

TRINITY HILL CARE CENTER

February 19, 2020

Written testimony of George Kingston, Administrator, Trinity Hill 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 George Kingston. I am the Administrator at Trinity Hill Care Center in Hartford, Connecticut. Trinity Hill Care Center has been providing nursing home care in our community for forty-four years. We are a 144 bed nursing home, and we have 165 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.

I am writing to you as the administrator, but these devoted caregivers, who work side by side with me on a daily basis all want what I want----that is to deliver the highest quality care experience to anyone who comes to Trinity Hill 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. We are proud of our facility's substance use disorder program, and look to the many lives changed as a result of these efforts.

I fear that our nursing home continues to be at a turning point 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.

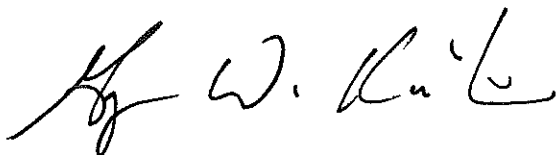
This Case Mix matter is of particular importance to me and my nursing facility because we are 99 percent occupied with 98 percentage of patients on State Medicaid. Many of my patients suffer from medical problems that are combined with either behavioral health or substance abuse issues. It's important that whatever system is implemented provides adequate reimbursement for efficient high occupancy and high Medicaid utilization nursing facilities and appropriately reimburses for patients with behavioral health or substance abuse issues. I know other States like right over the border in 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 for this 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 Trinity Hill Care Center, thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Please contact me at Trinity Hill Care Center if you wish to speak in greater detail.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. W. Kingston". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

George W. Kingston

Administrator