



February 20, 2020

Written testimony of Peter Mongillo, Center Executive Director, The Willows Center,
Concerning the Governor's Recommended FY2020 and FY 2021 Proposed Budget

Good evening Senator Osten Representative Walker and to the members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Peter Mongillo, and I am the Center Executive Director at The Willows in Woodbridge, CT. The Willows has been providing nursing home care in our community for 30 years. We are a 90-bed skilled nursing home, and we have over 100 employees working at our center.

I want to begin by thanking the Appropriations Committee for supporting increases in last session's budget for nursing and wage 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 needs on all shifts will be even more challenging as the Connecticut minimum wage continues 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 Willows Center Executive, 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 The Willows. These workers do an amazing job, and I am so grateful to them, and proud of them, for everything they are doing. The Willows is a 5 star overall rated facility 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 the case mix and how it reimburses nursing homes based on 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 the 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 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 residents also have greater behavioral health needs—mental health and substance 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 The Willows Center, thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Peter Mongillo".

Peter Mongillo
Center Executive Director
The Willows