



## **TESTIMONY**

Submitted by Samantha DiCicco, CEO/Executive Director/Administrator  
VNA of South Central Connecticut, Inc.

Appropriations Committee – Human Services Budget  
Public Hearing

**February 19, 2020**

### **Regarding the Governor's Budget for Human Services**

Good afternoon/evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Samantha DiCicco and I am the CEO and Administrator of the VNA of South Central CT (VNASCC). We are a non-profit home healthcare agency in New Haven, dedicated to providing a wide array of high-quality health services for individuals in their homes. The VNASCC is a highly regulated healthcare agency offering skilled nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, social work and home health aide under our DPH license and Medicare certification.

Our patient populations are residents of the Greater New Haven area who require care for either acute or chronic illnesses. We have been in business since 1904 but the State of Connecticut Medicaid reimbursement rates are threatening our legacy and our mission.

I am writing to you today to urge you to increase our industry's State Medicaid reimbursement rate as quickly as possible.

Home health care is the fastest growing major job category in the country, one of the most emotionally and personally demanding, and one of the worst paid. There has not been a reimbursement increase in 13 years yet over the past three years the Medicaid rates for services our agency provides has been reduced significantly. In 2016 the State implemented a 15% rate reduction to the Medication Administration program which provides service to the mental health population. Then in 2017 the State removed the add-on payment for the VNASCC. This decreased our reimbursement by approximately 22%. The total impact of these reductions for the VNASCC was 1.4 million dollars. In addition, DSS mandated implementation of the Sandata

Electronic Visit Verification process for all waiver programs in 2017—the impact on our agency has been approximately \$90,000 since it began and continues to be a burden and a liability.

In order for our organization to survive, many difficult decisions have recently been made including staff reductions, pay reductions, pay freezes, postponement of infrastructure upgrades, program eliminations and organization restructuring.

The VNASCC accepts the highest number of Medicaid patients from our local hospital and surrounding physicians than any other home healthcare agency. This number is by the hundreds of patients not just a few. While the agency has been able to weather the 2016 and 2017 storm, it is becoming increasingly more difficult to continue to provide services to the Medicaid patients. The State of Connecticut reimburses us less than what it costs to make a visit never mind cover administrative and regulatory supervisory requirements. For every patient on Connecticut State Medicaid we serve, we lose money. We make over 100,000 skilled visits per year and approximately 61,000 are State Medicaid patients. I am sure you can see how the current reimbursement is making it difficult to care for the people we both serve.

I am respectfully urging you, the legislature, to increase our Medicaid rates immediately as we are the biggest provider of Medicaid care for acutely and chronically ill patients in our community. Again, it is our mission to care for these clients but with no additional money we will not be able to fulfill our mission in caring for these patients who have been successfully served by VNASCC since 1904.

I would be happy to speak with you further on this topic. I also invite you to visit us at our Long Wharf location or attend a visit with a patient when you are in the area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Samantha DiCicco RN". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Samantha DiCicco, MBA-HCM, BSN, BA, RN  
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