

**Testimony of Kitty Richheimer**  
**ALBERTA MANOR, INC , ADMINISTRATOR**  
Re: H.B. 5055- H.B. No. 5005 AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE  
BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2021  
*Concerning*  
**Department of Social Services Budget- Residential Care Home Funding**  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Human Services Public Hearing, February 19, 2020

Senator Osten, Representative Walker and Members of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony, specifically on the Department of Social Services Budget related to Residential Care Home Funding.

My name is Kitty Richheimer and I am the Administrator at Alberta Manor located in Hartford. I am here to express the strong need for a rate increase for residential care homes throughout the state. If our industry continues to be significantly underfunded some homes will inevitably have to close leaving our residents with limited housing options.

The Governor's proposal to enable residential care homes to bill Medicaid acknowledges the need for higher rates. However, our industry has significant concerns with the proposal especially since it cuts money out of the budget that has been dedicated to residential care homes without knowing how much or what services we will be able to have covered by Medicaid.

Alberta Manor is a 30 bed residential care home for Connecticut's disadvantaged and disabled citizens. All of them suffer from mental illness of some form, and while they are able to clothe and feed themselves, they are incapable of performing any other day-to-day tasks. Our facility 's staff cooks for them, cleans after them, washes their laundry, manages their money, arranges their doctor appointments, ensures there are no issues with transportation, and works to renew their funding as required. In addition to these necessities, we also provide regular entertainment: hosting movie nights, hiring entertainers, arranging shopping trips, picnics at beaches, mini-golf trips, giving out playing Bingo, and much more.

This is all done for a low cost to the state while providing care to some of the most vulnerable people in the state. My home and other residential care homes throughout the state have had to get by with rates failing to keep up with costs and yet we serve as the safety net for many people with mental health diagnoses and substance abuse issues. Unlike other providers, almost all our residents are state funded limiting our ability to cost shift and make up for low rates.

The biggest challenge with the lack of rate increases is the ability to pay our employees a fair wage. We value our employees who deserve so much more for the work they do for a challenging but rewarding population.

Unfortunately, paying employees the necessary wages to attract quality hires to our industry continues to be a challenge resulting in employee turnover for many homes. Our industry strives to employ people in long term careers so that they can establish and maintain relationships with our residents. This leads to better long-term health outcomes, stability in the home and savings to our state.

The inconsistent funding also makes running our businesses difficult to run. We are constantly having to make repairs that are subject to state inspections. Our roof, driveway, emergency generator, heating systems, and plumbing require necessary yet expensive repairs and maintenance to ensure the safety and comfort of our home. In December 2019, our water boiler failed due to a mechanical error that could not be diagnosed or solved for weeks. Our residents could not have gone without working radiators and hot showers in the wintertime. We rented temporary water heaters to keep our residents clean and healthy, but these came with a high price tag on top of the price for a permanent repair to our boiler. Unexpected expenses like these are common in any building and business, but they are much harder to prepare and save for when we have a narrow budget. And though we want to pay our staff a fair and equitable wage for the essential and challenging work they perform, keeping our home comfortable for our residents must be our first priority.

Please support residential care home funding and uncap our rates so that we can help us keep our great employees and pay them fairer wages.

Kitty Richheimer

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kitty Richheimer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "K".

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