

Testimony of Luel Swanson
Greystone Retirement Home, Owner/Administrator

Re: 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

I am Luel Swanson, Owner and Administrator of Greystone Retirement Home in Portland, 20 minutes south of here. I have 58 residents and 30 employees and have been running Greystone for 20 years.

I take in homeless people who would otherwise be on the street, people being discharged from the hospital and can't go home and have nowhere else to go, a younger psychiatric population who are in the state's mental health care system, the substance abuse challenged, American veterans, and elderly residents. These citizens of the State of Connecticut are unable to live in their own apartment or home and have no private money to live in an Assisted Living Facility. Almost all of my residents are assisted through the State Supplement Program. Without Residential Care Homes they would be on the streets of Connecticut or in a Nursing Home at \$400 a day, without needing that level of medical care.

We are the desperately needed bridge between Home or Assisted Living and Nursing Homes. As this bridge or mid-level of care for Connecticut citizens, we save the state a great amount of money. Our daily/monthly rates have been frozen for over ten years now. We are trying our very best to operate on rates as if we are living in the world ten years ago, 2010. Stop and please think about this!! This is a tremendous burden. We are operating on a razor's edge. And if our census drops due to the passing away of a resident or they need a higher level of care, it is even more a critical issue because I no longer have the cash flow however need to continue to meet payroll every week. I cannot tell you how overwhelming and exhausting this has been.

We have been severely under-supported for too many years now. We need a significant injection of funding into our homes. We need rate increases every year so that we can keep up with inflation/cost of living increases; rising food costs, maintenance costs, prohibitive insurance costs, electricity, water, taxes, and perhaps most importantly, employee wages. Frequently, I cannot keep good staff because it is a struggle to pay them, and believe me, they are my #1 priority; staff is everything to me. And now the minimum wage is increasing to \$15 per hour. I do not know how we are going to survive.

We manage this struggle all while caring for the most vulnerable, fragile members of our society. What that comes with is all sorts of extremely challenging behaviors on a daily basis. If I don't have the money, I don't have the staff, and then I can't care for the people of this state who most need it and we close. I have had to keep up with our payroll every week while constantly doing repairs and making upgrades that result from state inspections. Where does this leave the state? With a huge segment of the state's population roaming the streets or putting extra strain on the mental health care system or in nursing homes. This will cost the state an extraordinary amount of more money. We need our rates increased, we need funding, we need to be listened to and supported. And the answer is not putting the burden on us to bill Medicaid and cutting monies out of the state budget that have already been dedicated to us. This also raises concerns about being categorized as medical which opens us up to many different liabilities. This is not the answer.

Thank you, Luel Swanson