

Testimony of James DeLano

Riverview Lodge Residential Care Home, Deep River, CT - Owner/Operator

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

Dear 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 James DeLano and I am the Owner/Administrator at Riverview Lodge Residential Care Home located in Deep River. I would like to take this opportunity to express the significant 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. We have not had a significant increase in almost a decade and it is unsustainable.

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. We are already understaffed and underpaying staff and to add billing to Medicaid would add an additional burden to our homes.

Riverview Lodge is a 31-bed RCH which serves adults with mental health challenges, we help these folks thrive in the community and we provide an essential service. With the financial constraints and difficulty attracting qualified staff as well as bringing people up to the new minimum wage requirements create an additional strain that we cannot sustain at rates that have been frozen for 10 years. We continually lose good staff to group homes and other industries, our staff has to do a lot of work with a great deal of responsibilities. This is our biggest challenge. We can't pay what is needed and provide benefits that are increasingly more costly to retain good staff. 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.

We provide these services low costs to the state we provide care to some of the most vulnerable people in our state. My home and other RCH's throughout the state have had to get by with rates which fail to keep up with costs and yet we serve as the safety net for many people with mental health diagnoses and substance abuse issues – these folks need a nice home in order to thrive.

The inconsistent funding makes running our businesses next to impossible. Having an old building and the inability to maintain and update due to lack of funding creates significant challenges. We are constantly having to make repairs that are subject to state inspections yet do not have funds to do necessary work. We desperately need help to continue to operate.

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.

James DeLano, Owner/Administrator

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