

**Testimony of Steve Richheimer
Tracy Manor, 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 Steve Richheimer and I am the Administrator at Tracy Manor located in West 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.

Tracy Manor is a 17 bed residential care home for Connecticut's disadvantaged and disabled citizens. Our residents suffer from mental illness of some form, and while they are able to dress and feed themselves, they need help performing most day-to-day tasks. We provide a home like atmosphere with 24 hour staffing to ensure the health and happiness of our residents. We deliver balanced meals and snacks throughout the day, housekeeping and laundry, schedules their doctor appointments, arrange or provide transportation, and supervise their medication. In addition to these necessities, we also provide regular entertainment each afternoon, hosting movie nights, hiring outside entertainers, organizing talent shows, arranging shopping trips, picnics at beaches, mini-golf trips, bingo nights, 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 that have been frozen 9 years while our cost increase every year beyond our control.

One of the biggest challenges with frozen rates is the ability to compensate our employees. We value our employees who deserve so much more for the work they do for a challenging but rewarding population. We have had a number of beloved employees who have worked with us for over a decade who needed to resign and find work elsewhere simply because their cost of living outpaced the wages we could afford

to pay them. Retaining our experienced employees leads to better long-term health outcomes, stability in the home and savings to our state.

We are now also struggling to continue paying for our employees' health insurance. It has increased 20% this year alone and continues to rise every year while our rates remain frozen.

It is unrealistic and unfair to expect the states RCH's to continue paying ever increasing cost with rates frozen for almost a decade! The viability of our industry is now in jeopardy. We serve as the safety net for many people with mental health diagnoses and who without Connecticut's RCH's would end up in much more expensive and restrictive levels of care.

Please support residential care home funding and uncap our rates so that we can help us keep our great employees and provide the best possible care to our residents.

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