



February 22, 2021

Senator Derek Slap Co-Chair.

Representative Quentin Phipps Co-Chair

Aging Committee Members

State Capitol Building, Room 011

Hartford, CT 06106

Honorable Aging Committee Members-

I'm writing in support of including a review of skilled home health reimbursement under S.B. No. 898 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF MEDICAID FUNDED PROGRAMS, and specifically related to the proposed act's empowering in Section 1. (a) *"The Commissioner of Social Services shall conduct a study of Medicaid-funded state programs administered under Title XIX of the Social Security Act, as amended from time to time. Such study shall include, but need not be limited to, a report on: (1) Factors the commissioner deems pertinent to quality of care..."*

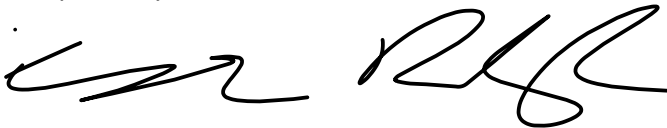
Accordingly, we would like to draw the Commissioner's attention to the fact that Connecticut's skilled home health rates and behavioral home health rates have increased less than 1% since 2004. Additionally, the medication administration rate was cut 17.5% in 2016. Turnover rates for behavioral home health clinicians in 2019 was 53%. Accordingly, we in Connecticut are now at the point where this continued lack of investment in skilled home health services, now coupled with the additional cost and staff stress associated with operating in a global pandemic, is undermining the consistent availability of these critical services and resulting in a lesser quality of care throughout the continuum of community based services funded under Title XIX of the Social Security Act. .

Access to skilled home health/ behavioral home health services is essential to reducing hospitalizations and avoidable facility placements for all patients and particularly for patients with severe mental health and co-morbid physical health diagnoses. Skilled home health services are specifically designed to cost effectively intervene clinically when a patient experiences a condition exacerbation that exceeds what can be treated by home and community based long term care (HCB/LTC) provider staff. Through their availability at these critical junctures, skilled home health services increase patient's lengths of stay in the HCBS/LTC setting by reducing re-admissions and avoiding downstream skilled nursing facility admissions. Accordingly, the failure to adequately fund skilled home health services diminishes the value Connecticut receives from its efforts to maintain long term care patients at home; and directly contributes to Connecticut's higher level of hospital admissions from the home and community setting and its avoidable utilization of skilled nursing facilities.

To address these quality issues arising from underfunded rates for over a decade, and to ensure Connecticut is able to adequately support its stated goals to treat individuals at home rather than an institution, we respectfully request the Commissioner, in association with the duties established via enactment of SB 898, make recommendation to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to aging and human services to increase the Medicaid rates for skilled home health providers by 4% not later than July 1, 2022.

Thank you for the opportunity to include this testimony in the February 23, 2021 Aging Committee public hearing agenda. If we can provide you any additional information in support of this recommendation, please simply request the same.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cale Bradford', written in a cursive style.

Cale Bradford, Chief Government Relations Officer
Elara Caring

