

TESTIMONY

Submitted by Richard Bernier, Jr., Father of Emery Timms-Bernier, a recipient of extended care home health nursing services

Appropriation Committee - Human Services Budget
Public Hearing

March 3, 2021

Regarding the Governor's Budget for Human Services

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Kushner, Representative Abercrombie and distinguished members of the Appropriations Human Services Sub-Committee. My name is Richard Bernier, father of a Medicaid recipient.

Richard Bernier, Jr., Father of Emery Timms-Bernier, recipient of home health nursing services from Allumé Home Care.

I am the father of Emery Timms-Bernier. I am writing to you today on the behalf of Emery and the many other medically complex children and adults living in CT. I am asking you to increase extended care Medicaid rates.

Emery is my beautiful 8-year-old son. Emery was born in 2013. He spent roughly the first 6 ½ years of his life in the hospital. After a litany of medical challenges, the hospital stabilized Emery so that he could safely go home, but the process of getting him out of the hospital and into home care was very challenging. There were (and are) very few home health agencies that specialize in around-the-clock nursing care for medically complex children. There was a backlog of other patients awaiting home health care. We were told it was due to lack of staffing.

Finally, on September 9, 2019, we were able to bring Emery home with Allume Home Care. After 6 ½ years in the hospital, I have been able to care for him safely at home with the support of our team of nurses that come every day. In those two years, Emery has had excellent overall health with the nursing interventions we have at home and has not had to return to the hospital during this time.

I want you to understand my son. Emery is a bright, engaging, amazing little boy. I am grateful every day to be his father. Emery has a tracheostomy, receives oxygen support and is fed through a g-/j-tube. He is non-ambulatory, non-verbal, has seizures, and requires various medical treatments throughout the day and night.

I am asking the Appropriations Committee to please increase extended care Medicaid Rates. This will enable our home health agency to hire more nurses to fill Emery's open shifts. Because extended care Medicaid rates are so low, nurses can choose to work in other settings, making it challenging to recruit nurses to care for Emery. Since he has been home, **I have lost a couple nurses that became "Family" due to higher pay in other institutions.**

As a widowed single father, having reliable nursing care is critical. I need all the help I can get to make sure I can go to work, support my family, and care for my other two children (11&9). Add the virtual schooling for both and it is a handful. This support makes it possible for my family to function and have a somewhat normal life.

I plea to you to move swiftly on behalf of complex care patients, families, and providers. We cannot do this alone. We need your support to fund these very vulnerable patients whose cost of care will only increase.

Thank you for considering my request. Increasing extended care Medicaid rates for medically complex children and adults will positively impact my son, Emery, along with hundreds of other complex care patients and families in a tremendously positive way.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. Feel free to contact me with any questions.

Richard Bernier, Jr.

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