

March 3, 2021

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and to the members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Lizbeth Carmichael. I am Center Executive Director at Village Green of Bristol in Forestville, Connecticut. Village Green of Bristol has been providing nursing home care in our community for 52 years. We are a 93 nursing home with a 30 bed vent unit, and we have 143 employees working at our facility.

Our nursing home, the residents we serve, and our employees, have been challenged like in no other time during the epic and ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency. Like all nursing home we were specifically impacted, keeping our vulnerable vent residents COVID Free was a tremendous team effort and challenge. We implemented all the CDC and DPH protocols. We performed resident and staff testing when testing became available in the early summer. We secured the PPE we needed and overcame the supply shortages that were present early in the pandemic. I am very proud of what our team was able to do as we were up against a virus that spreads through persons showing no symptoms and in a state that was impacted with challenging rates of community spread of the virus. We faced and still have staffing challenges like never before and we adapted to the severe and emotionally devastating visitor restrictions by facilitating communication and visitors through outdoor, indoor when allowed, compassionate care and virtual visits.

The sustained vigilance of our staff and the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out are now showing us the pathway to the end of this pandemic for our nursing home. Our resident vaccination percentage rate is 79%. 59% percent of staff have been vaccinated.

However, the nursing home occupancy decline experienced due to ongoing pandemic have created unprecedented financial consequences to our already underfunded nursing home. Our pre-pandemic occupancy was 91 %. Today occupancy is 83%. We believe we will recover by 2022, but much more support is needed to help us get us to the other side of this pandemic. The federal and state support we have received this far, but much more help will be needed in the state budget Connecticut adopts this session. The level funding and severely underfunded acuity-based payment system in the Governor's proposed budget for nursing homes must not be approved. At this critical juncture, a substantial funding increase to our nursing homes is imperative so we can deliver the high-quality care we know everyone wants as we recover from this epic pandemic that has caused so much tragedy for our community.

On behalf of everyone at Village Green of Bristol, please substantially increase the funding for our severely threatened Connecticut nursing homes.

Thank you.

*Lizbeth Carmichael*