

March 1, 2021

HB-6439 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023

MARCH 3, 2021

Honorable Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Alfredo Castillo and I am here today to give back to an organization and a group of front line health care workers that have given so much to me. I am here to ask you to support Hospital for Special Care for me and for patients like me – and to make sure they have the funding they need to continue to take care of the people who need it most.

Hospital for Special Care was there for me in 2015 when I needed intensive rehabilitation after I was shot in the neck. They taught me how to breathe on my own again, they helped me learn all the skills I would need to navigate life in a whole new way, they managed every health crisis that came up over the course of the nearly three years it took for me to get strong enough to go home.

My injuries aren't simple and they aren't easy to live with. I am incredibly grateful to every frontline health care worker - every nurse, every doctor, every respiratory therapist, every physical and occupational therapist, every CNA – everyone who has been a part of my care – and everyone I am still working with at Hospital for Special Care today to maintain my strength and mobility and to deal with the medical issues people with spinal cord injuries like mine face.

I wanted to speak to you today as a patient, and on behalf of hundreds of other patients like me. I stay in touch with patients I met at HFSC who didn't get to go home like I did, I mentor patients with new spinal cord injuries, who are right where I was six years ago. I feel a responsibility to speak for them.

I also know what it's like to be a front line health care worker. I was a certified nursing assistant, a CNA, before my injury – but I had to leave that work because I could not earn enough to live on. Everyone who took care of me at Hospital for Special Care deserves to make a living wage. The hospital can't make that happen, they can't pay for the high cost medications and supplies patients like me need, without your help.

Hospital for Special Care is unique – it's a chronic disease hospital – that takes care of a lot of patients who rely on Medicaid – because complex medical care wipes out your resources, no matter what you start out with in life. They have kept my friends safe during the pandemic - and taken care of COVID-19 patients who needed the same intensive rehab I did.

They can't keep doing this work without your help. State Medicaid reimbursement does not meet the cost of caring for patients like me. The last time chronic disease hospitals like HFSC received a permanent rate increase was in 2007.

I'm here to support them - like they've been there to support me – but they need - I need - your help so they can support me and everyone like me who needs this very unique level of care.

Please support Hospital for Special Care with the four (4) percent Medicaid rate increase they need. Please make sure it is in the state budget.

Alfredo Castillo
Torrington, CT