



March 3, 2021

Written testimony of Holly Giuditta-Deming, Administrator, Touchpoints Rehab at Chestnut Concerning the Governor's Recommended FY 2022 and FY 2023 Proposed Budget

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and to the members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Holly Giuditta-Deming. I am Administrator at Touchpoints Rehab at Chestnut in East Windsor, Connecticut. Touchpoints Rehab at Chestnut has a long-standing history as a fixture of the community. We are a 60 bed nursing home, and we have 75 employees working at our facility.

Our skilled nursing facility, the residents we serve, and our employees, have experienced unprecedented and monumental challenges during this epic and ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency.

Our facility, our residents and our staff were significantly impacted, having had an outbreak in October 2020 with direct consequences for our residents and staff. 56 residents and staff contracted COVID, and although most recovered, we still grieve the many lives lost to this highly contagious and deadly virus. What is especially heartbreaking and tragic is that our staff did all that was in their power to protect our residents. We implemented all the CDC and DPH protocols. We implemented rigorous resident and staff testing once it 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 especially proud of the dedication and courage shown by our staff, and our facility residents and their families for their efforts to mitigate the spread of the virus within our facility as a resurgence spread widely through our local communities. I believe that if you had witnessed their resolve firsthand as I did, you would also be proud of them. We faced staffing challenges like never before and we adapted to the severe and emotionally devastating visitor restrictions by facilitating telephonic and virtual communications between residents and their families, as well as visitation through outdoor, compassionate care and virtual indoor visits when allowed.

The sustained vigilance of our staff and the early availability of the of COVID-19 vaccine for our residents and staff are now showing us the very welcome possibility of an end to this pandemic for our facility residents and staff. Our resident vaccination percentage rate is 98%. 65% of staff have been vaccinated.

Touchpoints at Chestnut was one of the first skilled nursing facility to start receiving the Pfizer COVID-19 Vaccine and we are extremely grateful for having our residents and staff receive the vaccine as soon as it

became available.
Part of the iCare Health Network

As we fought this year-long battle with the pandemic, our facility's occupancy declined significantly and has created unprecedented financial consequences to our already underfunded facility. Our pre-pandemic occupancy was 92%. Today occupancy is 73%. We believe we will recover by 2022, but much more support is needed in order for us to get to the other side of this pandemic. The federal and state support we have received thus far has helped, but much more help will be needed in the state budget that 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, as it would have devastating consequences on our residents and our staff that have been so faithfully and patiently holding down the front lines. 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 Touchpoints Rehab at Chestnut, please substantially increase the funding for our severely threatened Connecticut nursing homes.

Thank you.