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***Written testimony of Giovanna Griffin, Senior Center Executive Director, Meriden Center,
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 Giovanna Griffin. I am the Senior Center Executive Director at Meriden Center in Meriden, Connecticut. Meriden Center has been providing nursing home care in our community for over forty (40) years. We are a 130-bed skilled nursing home, and we have 125 staff team members working at our facility.

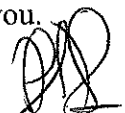
Our nursing home, the residents and patients we serve, and our employees, have been challenged like in no other time during the epic and ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency. We were specifically impacted. Our nursing home had four (4) outbreaks in the last 51 weeks with direct consequences for all residents and staff: A total of eighteen (18) residents and seven (7) staff contracted the virus. While Meriden Center nursing home residents and patients recovered, we lost one (1) staff to the 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 and patients. We implemented all the CDC and DPH protocols. We implemented rigorous 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 we were able to do as we were up against a virus that spread through persons showing no symptoms and in a state that was impacted with challenging rates of community spread of the virus. We faced staffing challenges like never before and we adapted to the severe and emotionally devastating visitor restrictions by facilitating at least weekly family communication sessions and scheduled 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 87% and 73% 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 80 %. Today occupancy is 78%. We believe we will recover by 2022, but much more support is needed for our threatened industry to help us get to the other side of this pandemic. We have received federal and state support but much more help will be needed in the state budget Connecticut adopts this session. The level of 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 Meriden Center, please substantially increase the funding for our severely threatened Connecticut nursing homes.

Thank you,



Giovanna Griffin,

Senior Center Executive Director

Meriden Center