



*Founded in 1961 by Dr. Seymour I. Zonn*

March 3, 2021

**Written testimony of Administrator from Middlebury Convalescent Home, Inc. 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 Jeanine Hammitt. I am the Administrator at Middlebury Convalescent Home, Incorporated in Middlebury, Connecticut. Middlebury Convalescent Home is a facility which has provided nursing home care in our community for 60 years. We are a five-star 58 bed nursing home which retains a staff of 95 employees.

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. Our nursing home had an outbreak in December 2020 with devastating consequences for our residents and staff. All residents except for one contracted the virus and 53 employees tested positive for COVID. While 22 nursing home residents recovered, we lost 13 residents to the highly contagious and deadly virus. We have staff members who are still recovering from the effects of the December outbreak. What is especially heartbreaking and tragic is that our staff did all that was in their power to protect our residents. The virus was kept out for ten months. We implemented all the CDC and DPH protocols along with 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 what we were able to do as we were up against a virus that spreading 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 communication and visitors through outdoor, indoor, virtual, and when allowed, compassionate care visits.

The sustained vigilance of our staff and the COVID-19 vaccine availability are now showing us the pathway to the end of this pandemic for our nursing home. Our resident vaccination percentage rate is 100%. About two thirds of the staff has been vaccinated thus far.

However, the nursing home occupancy decline as a result of the ongoing pandemic has created unprecedented financial consequences to our already underfunded nursing home. Today occupancy is 55%. We believe we will recover by next year, but much more support is needed to help us recuperate from this pandemic. The federal and state support we have received this far has alleviated some of the financial burden, but much more assistance will be needed in the upcoming state budget. The level of financing and severely underfunded acuity-based payment system in the Governor's proposed budget for nursing homes must not be approved.

At this critical time, a significant funding increase to our nursing homes is necessary in order to continue to provide high-quality care. This is our commitment to our communities, which have suffered so much loss.

On behalf of everyone at Middlebury Convalescent Home, Inc. please substantially increase the funding for our severely threatened Connecticut nursing homes.

Thank you for your consideration in this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeanine Hammitt".

Jeanine Hammitt

Administrator

Middlebury Convalescent Home, Incorporated