



Litchfield Woods

Health Care Center

March 3, 2021

***Written testimony of Marisa Jones, Administrator, Litchfield Woods Health Care 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 Marisa Jones. I am the Administrator at Litchfield Woods Health Care Center in Torrington, Connecticut. We have been providing nursing home care in our community for 38 years. We are a 160-bed nursing home, and we have over 200 employees working at our facility.

Our nursing home, the residents we serve, and our employees, have been challenged like nothing we have ever seen before during this epic and ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency. As many are aware, Litchfield Woods was significantly impacted with the initial onslaught of the virus. Our nursing home had an outbreak in the Spring with direct consequences for our residents and staff: 126 residents and 54 staff contracted the virus. While 86 nursing home residents recovered, we lost 40 residents and unfortunately, also lost one staff member, 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 with the resources available. 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 our team was able to do while up against a virus that rapidly spread, showing no symptoms, and in a state that was impacted with challenging rates of community spread. We faced staffing challenges like we've never seen before, and we adapted to the severe and emotionally devastating visitor restrictions by facilitating communication in whatever means possible.

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 90% and 50 percent of staff have been vaccinated.

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However, the nursing home occupancy decline experienced due to the ongoing pandemic have created unprecedented financial consequences to our already underfunded nursing home. Our pre-pandemic occupancy was 97 %. Today occupancy is approximately 80%. We believe we will recover by 2022, but much more support is needed to help us get to the other side of this pandemic. The federal and state support we have received this far is appreciated, 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 and deserves as we recover from this devastating pandemic that has caused so much tragedy for our community.

On behalf of everyone at Litchfield Woods Health Care Center, please substantially increase the funding for our severely threatened Connecticut nursing homes.

Thank you.