



March 3, 2021

*Written testimony of Judith Konow-Hinds, Administrator, Chelsea Place 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 Judy Konow-Hinds. I am Administrator at Chelsea Place Care Center in Hartford, Connecticut. Chelsea Place is a longstanding provider of skilled care in the community with 250 employees and 234 licensed beds. My facility is managed by iCare Health Network, a Connecticut based company which was established in 2001. At Chelsea Place we have diverse programs to serve an underserved population. Ninety eight percent (98%) of the residents residing at Chelsea Place are on State Medicaid. In addition to providing skilled nursing services, rehab services and memory care we have one of the most well -known and respected Behavioral Health Programs in the state. We provide extensive services to the often stigmatized population of those suffering from Mental Illnesses including Substance Use Disorders. This underserved group of people is often difficult to place within the continuum of care.

Our nursing home community, like so many others had the most devastating year in 2020. No one could have imagined the suffering and loss we would face from the Covid – 19 Pandemic. In the Spring of 2020, 90 Residents and 50 staff contracted this terrible virus. Though our staff and residents did everything they could to protect themselves and each other this virus proved to be extremely contagious and deadly. It was heartbreaking to see the suffering this disease caused to those we love and cared about in our Chelsea family.

At Chelsea Place and throughout the entire iCare Health Network we implemented aggressive preventative measures and infection control policies and procedures, including the universal use of masks and eye covering well before it was mandated. We did all we could to brace for these unprecedented times, including securing additional staffing through an out of state staffing agency and searching for and securing PPE from over 40 vendors around the world. We initiated weekly testing of our Staff and Residents in May; prior to any mandates to do so. We were among the first to test the entire community including those who were asymptomatic. I am extremely proud of all of the measures we took so early in the pandemic. Though these measures were extremely costly to the facility, the companies approach was to save lives and persevere against this virus and to worry about the monetary cost later.

We are happy to say that we have had very few cases of Covid Positive residents and staff and NO transmission of the virus to any resident within the facility since the Spring of 2020. As of February 2021 we have 93% of our residents vaccinated and nearly 80% of our staff. Though the pandemic is not over and many still suffer from the physical, mental and emotional toll Covid took on each of us, we feel a great relief that the worst is behind us. Now that we look to the future we must find a way to stabilize financially so that we can continue to provide quality care and enrich the lives of the resident's we serve in our facilities. Not only were there significant costs to be able to staff our facilities and protect our communities, but we also had the most significant occupancy decline that we have ever experienced at Chelsea Place. As Administrator at Chelsea Place these past 11 years our occupancy averaged around 95%. Today's occupancy is 83%. While we are appreciative of the state and federal support thus far, we need much more help. It is imperative for our industry that we receive a substantial funding increase to our nursing homes so that we can recover from this horrible Pandemic. On behalf of everyone at Chelsea Place we ask that the current proposed budget for nursing homes not be approved and that you substantially increase the funding for our Connecticut Nursing Homes that were so severely impacted by Covid-19.

Thank You.