



# CHESTEM

HEALTH & REHABILITATION CENTER

March 3, 2021

**RE: Written testimony of Brenda Marinan, Administrator of Chestelm Health & Rehabilitation 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 Brenda Marinan. I am the Administrator at Chestelm Health & Rehabilitation Center in Moodus, Connecticut. Chestelm has been providing nursing home care in our community for over 30 years. We are a 76 bed nursing home, and we have 129 employees working at our facility.

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. We were specifically impacted. Our nursing home had an outbreak in January, 2021, with direct consequences for are residents and staff: 38 residents contracted the virus and 26 staff contracted the virus. While 28 nursing home residents recovered, we lost 10 residents 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. We had 99% of our residents who received the first dose of Pfizer Vaccine and 85% of our employees who received the first dose of Pfizer's vaccine prior to our Outbreak. We thought we might successfully ward off this awful virus. Unfortunately, community rates skyrocketed, and we were not spared. We have had over 14 Focused Infection Control Surveys with no findings or outcomes. We implemented all the CDC and DPH protocols. We implemented rigorous resident and staff testing when testing became available in the early summer. We were also using our Rapid Tests supplied to us by testing employees daily. Employees would show up to work and we would test them and have to tell them they had COVID and could not report to work. They had no idea they had the virus. This is the unfortunate aspect of COVID-19. We secured the PPE we needed and overcame the supply shortages that were present early in the pandemic. I am extremely 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 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 99%, and 95% 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 95 % and had been in the 90%ile for years. Today occupancy is 80%. We believe we will recover by 2022, but much more support is needed for our threatened to help us get us to the other side of this pandemic. The federal and state support we have received this far, 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 as we recover from this epic pandemic that has caused so much tragedy for our community. More regulatory requirements are being placed upon us with mandated Infection Control Staffing and Training. We need your help. This will in turn help our elder population that we love and care for.

On behalf of everyone at Chestelm Health & Rehabilitation Center, please substantially increase the funding for our severely threatened Connecticut nursing homes.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'B. Marinan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Brenda Marinan  
Administrator