

HB-6439 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023

MARCH 3, 2021

Honorable Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Tracy McKaveney and I am a volunteer member of the Board of Directors of Hospital for Special Care (HFSC). I submit this testimony to you today specifically to request your help in ensuring that the state act to increase Hospital for Special Care's Medicaid rate by four (4) percent in the Department of Social Services budget and keep this vital resource for our state's most vulnerable patients.

Hospital for Special Care (HFSC) is a unique resource in Connecticut and provides very specialized inpatient and outpatient medical care for patients who are on ventilators, or require advanced respiratory care, patients with spinal cord injuries, neuromuscular disorders like ALS, muscular dystrophy and other rare diseases, and patients who have suffered traumatic brain injuries, stroke or other catastrophic medical conditions. HFSC also provides care for infants, toddlers, children and adolescents facing complex medical conditions and provides the most comprehensive services for children with autism in our state.

I volunteer to serve on the Hospital for Special Care Board of Directors because I am passionate about the work of specialty hospitals after I personally witnessed family members benefit from their services. It is personally gratifying to have an impact on such an important organization and the lives of its patients. The Hospital for Special Care rebuilds lives and nothing is more inspiring than the successes of our patients.

HFSC is licensed as a chronic disease hospital and provides the majority of long-term post-acute care to pediatric and adult Medicaid patients from nearly every town in our state. HFSC is an independent non-profit organization that works collaboratively with every hospital and hospital system to coordinate care for patients after they leave the ICU or critical care unit. Without HFSC, there is no place for these patients to get the care they need – and they would remain in acute care at much higher cost to our state systems.

HFSC's Medicaid rate has not changed since 2007, but patient care costs have reason \$3 million per year in the last few years alone. The hospital faced a massive fiscal challenge prior to the pandemic and now faces even greater challenges as operating deficits grow and threaten the organization's ability to care for the patients who need it the most and to recruit and retain the skilled staff who deliver that care.

Please, ensure Hospital for Special Care's patients receive the care they need – the care Connecticut counts on this hospital to provide - by increasing the Medicaid reimbursement rate for chronic disease hospitals by four (4) percent in the state budget. The cost of this increase to the state is minimal in the scope of this budget – the cost of failing to act is monumental for patients and the entire health care system.

Tracy McKaveney
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