



**March 3, 2021**

***Written testimony of Heather Rodriguez, LNHA, Administrator, Wintonbury Care Center dba Touchpoints At Bloomfield Concerning the Governor's Recommended FY 2022 and FY 2023 Proposed Budget***

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Heather Rodriguez. I am the Administrator at Wintonbury Care Center dba Touchpoints at Bloomfield in Bloomfield, Connecticut. Touchpoints At Bloomfield has been providing skilled nursing care in our community for 44 years. We are a 150 bed nursing home, and we have 174 employee working at our facility. Our facility, the residents we serve, and our employees, were affected very early on by the COVID-19 virus and have confronted incredible challenges in trying to protect our residents and staff against spread of the virus for the past year. We were specifically impacted as we experienced outbreaks of COVID in March 2020 and again in September 2020 with direct consequences for our residents and staff.

During 2020, 148 of our residents and staff contracted COVID. We were relieved to have many of those recover however, we've hardly had a chance to fully process the grief we experienced with those that we lost to COVID, some of whom had been with us for many, many years. The demands of COVID and Infection Prevention on our daily operations hasn't really allowed us the opportunity to grieve or even to reflect on what we've been through. We've done everything we could to try to protect our residents and staff. 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 extremely proud of our staff and residents who sacrificed much while continuing to work aggressively against the spread of the virus within our facility at first and then again as community positivity rates grew with more recent resurgence. It has been a very long and exhausting year. In addition to our daily caregiving responsibilities we adapted to accommodate the social and emotional needs of our residents by facilitating alternative means of communication with their families who could not visit and by arranging, scheduling and monitoring the safety of outdoor visits, compassionate care and end of life visits, and other indoor visits when allowed.

With the effects of the COVID-19 vaccine and because of the continued work of our staff and the cooperation and sacrifices of our residents and their families, we are eagerly anticipating an end to the COVID pandemic soon. Our resident vaccination percentage rate is 85% and 75% percent of staff have been vaccinated, and we are very appreciative of the vaccine being provided to our residents and staff so soon after it became available. Nonetheless as we have been battling the pandemic, COVID's effects have included a threat to our survival as a healthcare provider. We

have continued to see a significant decline in our occupancy due to COVID with unprecedented financial consequences to our already underfunded facility. Our pre-pandemic occupancy was 97% but today stands at only 77%.

We are optimistic that we can recover by 2022, but only with much more financial support to get us through. The federal and state support we have received this far has helped us to keep us afloat through the emergency, but much more help will be needed in the budget adopted by Connecticut in this session. Our residents, our staff and I need, and ask, that the level funding and severely underfunded acuity-based payment system in the Governor's proposed budget for nursing homes NOT BE approved. I feel very strongly that we have gone above and beyond in our efforts to protect our facility residents and staff from COVID-19, and now must ask you to recognize what we need in order for us to continue to serve the needs of our present and future residents by enabling our post-COVID survival.

On behalf of the resident and staff of Touchpoints At Bloomfield, please substantially increase the funding for our severely threatened Connecticut nursing homes.

Thank you.

Heather Rodriguez, LNHA  
Administrator