

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:

I am specifically requesting 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 to enable Hospital for Special Care (HFSC) to continue to provide care for our state's most vulnerable patients. My name is Alexandra Thomas and I serve on HFSC's Board of Directors.

HFSC is a unique resource in Connecticut; it provides very specialized inpatient and outpatient medical care for patients on ventilators or requiring advanced respiratory care; patients with spinal cord injuries, neuromuscular disorders (e.g., ALS), muscular dystrophy, and other rare diseases; and patients suffering from traumatic brain injuries, stroke, or other catastrophic medical conditions. HFSC also provides care for infants, toddlers, children, and adolescents facing complex medical conditions. Finally, HFSC provides the most comprehensive services for children with autism in our state.

As such, patients here typically require a high degree of advanced care, simply not provided by other facilities. I serve on HFSC's Board of Directors because, as a health care attorney, I understand the important role this hospital plays in our Connecticut community and to our health care delivery system. During the pandemic, HFSC also offered critical relief to many overburdened short term acute care hospitals by expanding bed capacity to care for patients severely impacted by COVID-19 who required intensive rehabilitation, expediting admission of other critically ill patients to make ICU beds available, and loaning ventilators to hospitals across the state when needed.

Without HFSC, there is no place for these patients to receive the care they need – they would remain in acute care at much higher cost to our state systems. 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.

HFSC's Medicaid rate has not changed since 2007, but patient care costs have risen \$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 their patients 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.

Alexandra Thomas
Farmington, Connecticut