



March 1, 2021

Written testimony of Christine Tkacz, Administrator, Meadowbrook of Granby 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 Christine Tkacz. I am the Administrator at Meadowbrook of Granby in Granby, Connecticut. Meadowbrook of Granby has been providing nursing home care in our community for 29 years. We are a 90 bed nursing home, and we have approximately 160 employee working at our facility. We are part of Athena Healthcare systems, and are very fortunate to be a part of a company who stepped up to the plate to support this pandemic.

Our nursing home, the residents we serve, and our employees, have been challenged like no other time during the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency. We were able to maintain a COVID naïve status, until this past fall. Our nursing home has a current outbreak that commenced in November of 2020 and has not yet resolved. This outbreak has had direct consequences for our residents and staff: Ninety residents contracted the virus and sixty-six staff contracted the virus. While sixty-five nursing home residents recovered, we lost twenty-five 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 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. Most of all we maintained our professionalism and continued to reassure our residents, families, and each other. I am very proud of what we were able to do, as we were up against a virus that spread 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.

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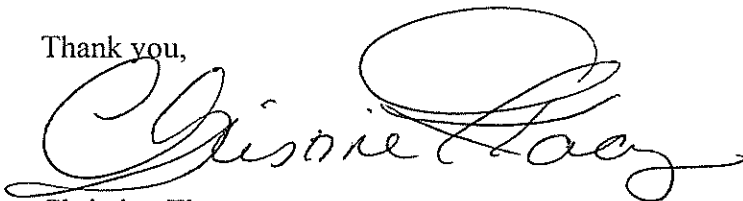
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The sustained vigilance of our staff and the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out are now showing us the pathway to the end of this pandemic for our nursing home. Our resident vaccination percentage rate is 79%, as well as 70% of staff have been vaccinated. Our resident vaccination was higher at one point, but those residents discharged back to the community, so we no longer count them in our current numbers.

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 94 %. Today occupancy is 71%. We believe we will recover by 2022, but much more support is needed 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. It is very clear that everyone wants to recover from this epic pandemic that has caused so much tragedy for our community.

On behalf of everyone at Meadowbrook of Granby, please substantially increase the funding for our severely threatened Connecticut nursing homes.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Christine Tkacz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent loop at the top.

Christine Tkacz

Administrator

Meadowbrook of Granby