

Human Services Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-412

AN ACT INCREASING MEDICAID RATES FOR COMPLEX CARE NURSING

Title: SERVICES.

Vote Date: 3/7/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference to Appropriations

PH Date: 2/14/2023

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Human Services Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

Complex care allows patients to receive care at home within the presence of their families. With the long hours, nurses develop relationships with the patient and family. However, because of the current rate differential, this relationship would be affected once a patient turns 19. This impacts families as they may have to stop working to provide care. The current Medicaid rate also prevents home care agencies from recruiting and retaining nurses, especially because of the pandemic, leading to staff shortages. This bill would increase the Medicaid rate for complex care nursing services provided in-home to the same rate as those provided in nursing homes and eliminate the rate differential based on the age of a patient.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language removes language equalizing rates between home care complex nursing services and such care at skilled nursing facilities. Additionally, it requires there be no differential in rate for home care complex nursing services based on age of patient.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Department of Social Services (DSS), William Gui Woolston, Director of Medicaid & Division of Health Services; opposes this bill stating rate parity between home and nursing home care would be an inefficient use of taxpayer dollars and risks federal match. It is stated the federal match will be at risk as it would establish a reimbursement method for home and community-based services that is not allowed under federal or state regulations.

It is stated that nursing home rates reflect costs associated with maintaining infrastructure and operations (roof, HVAC, vendor payments etc.) and approved HCBS reimbursement methods limit the state from paying for capital costs. It is stated DSS has a mechanism for medically complex cases where costs may exceed current reimbursement levels. It is also stated DSS will review cost documentation from home health agencies to determine if rate increase is needed to support medically necessary care.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

All Pointe Home Care, Administrator, Anellie Reed; supports the bill stating an increase in rates would allow the agency to offer more competitive wages, thereby drawing nurses into this field of nursing. It is stated agencies are struggling to find qualified caregivers to take care of these very complex individuals because they simply can't compete with institution wages which draw nurses in that direction. It is stated that an increase in rates will allow agencies to offer more competitive wages into this field of nursing.

All Pointe Home Care, Co-Owner, Coco Sellman; supports the bill stating that no other state has a complex care rate that changes with age. It is stated that the current rate differential between pediatric and adult complex care rates have a significant impact on patient access. It is also stated she believes in complex care at home due to her daughter who receives care at home and should receive the same level of support regardless of her age.

The Arc of Connecticut, Inc., Director of Advocacy, Carol Scully; supports this bill sharing individuals with complex care needs are on DSS/DDS Medicaid waivers that provide services for persons with intellectual developmental/developmental disabilities and persons with Autism. It is stated that access to healthcare for persons who are disabled is mandated by the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). It is also stated there is a lack of accessible healthcare including providers and medical equipment for persons with disabilities in Connecticut.

CT Association for Healthcare at Home, President & CEO, Tracy Wodatch; supports bill stating that Connecticut is the only state that pay a different rate for children and adults and agencies cannot pay nurses at one rate to care for children and another rate to pay for similar care for adults. It is stated that at-home complex care nursing saves the stated \$60 million per year. It is also stated that to avoid the higher cost of facility care and ensure these savings, they are asking for an additional investment in the adult complex care Medicaid budget of \$3 million.

Aveanna Healthcare, Nursing Supervisor, Jose Perez; supports this bill stating patients over the age of 18 should not receive a lesser standard of care due to the rate differential.

Elara Caring, VP for Pediatrics, Bree Sanca; supports the bill stating that separating the continuous skilled nursing rate by age will most certainly impact how this population will access care in the future. It is stated that patients and their families deserve qualified caregivers that can manage and attend to their complex care needs. It is stated that there are patients in our state waiting in our acute care hospitals who are not able to go home because there are no agencies available to care for them; that means that the state is incurring costs for these patients that far exceed the cost of caring for them at home.

Elara Caring, Lead Field Supervisor of Pediatrics & Private Duty Nursing, Sarah Morneault; supports this bill sharing a patient experience and how having a private duty nurse allowed the patient to remain at home and live their best quality of life before their death. It is stated this bill will ensure all patients, regardless of age, can be cared for at home with their families and an attentive nurse

Parent of a Complex Care Individual, Leticia Gonzalez; supports the bill stating that it has been difficult to find a home care agency to provide her daughter with the required 23 hours a day complex care nursing care and has affected her family overall. It is also stated increasing the Medicaid rate and eliminating the rate differential will allow home care agencies to become more competitive, improve recruitment, retention and at home patients' health outcomes.

Parent of a Complex Care Individual, Frank Sellman; supports the bill stating it is both discriminatory and appalling that the state intentionally implemented a rate based on age in 2021 and that his daughter is an in-home complex nursing care patient. It is stated that after his daughter she started receiving in-home nursing care with the increased medical interventions, her visits to the hospital have diminished and her overall health and wellbeing remains strong. It is also stated the recent changes in the Medicaid rate, lowering the rate for patients over eighteen years of age, makes his daughter extremely vulnerable and fears she will lose her nurses if they can be paid more to care for younger patients elsewhere.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None stated.

Reported by: Isaac Agyemang-Duah

Date: March 14, 2023