

Written Testimony in Support of House Bill 5639
AN ACT CONCERNING PUBLIC HEARINGS ON REQUESTS OF CERTAIN LONG-TERM
CARE FACILITIES TO CLOSE OR REDUCE BED CAPACITY

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Submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly

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Greetings Chairperson Harris, Chairperson Villano, Vice Chairperson Coleman, Vice Chairperson Ambercrombie, and all the Members of the Human Services Committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify in support of House Bill 5639, An Act Concerning Public Hearings on Requests of Certain Long-Term Care Facilities to Close or Reduce Bed Capacity.

As the Committee members may recall, I testified before you on February 6, 2007 about The Jewish Home for the Elderly's plans to develop a new Senior Living Campus in Monroe, CT. The site is approximately six (6) miles from our current location in Fairfield. It is large enough to allow for the development of Independent and Assisted Living and a replacement of our current Skilled Nursing facility in Fairfield, CT in such a way as to establish a life enhancing and a quality of life environment for the elderly that would be a model of a truly integrated senior living community for the State and our region.

For any members who were not present for my previous testimony, I will briefly recap the reasons we feel this new Senior Living Campus makes sense for the State of Connecticut:

1. *The new Nursing Home will improve the Quality and Dignity of the lives of the residents we serve.* The Jewish Home's new Senior Living Campus will be the first new nursing home to be built in Connecticut in quite some time, and we think it is a tremendous opportunity to introduce cutting-edge paradigms of what quality long-term care can be. Taking a cue from the national Robert Wood Johnson Long-Term Care Demonstration Project, we have proposed to host Connecticut's first Greenhouse pilot project. Greenhouses do away with the traditional skilled nursing facility model and create real "homes" for small groups of residents. The new nursing home will also feature private rooms and bathrooms for every resident, designed to maximize dignity and quality of life.
2. *The Senior Living Campus will decrease The Jewish Home's reliance on State Medicaid funds and save taxpayer dollars.* By reducing our skilled nursing beds from 360 to 280, we estimate that we will save the State approximately \$6 million per year in Medicaid funds.
3. *The reduction of beds will not adversely affect bed availability in Fairfield County.* We are only proposing a 1% decrease in the total available beds in Fairfield. The Legislature has set the standard for "need for beds" at a 97.5% occupancy rate in the affected area. Given the Office of Policy and Management's (OPM) 2005 census of 94% bed occupancy in Fairfield County¹, our reduction will not create a capacity problem for our region. We conducted a significant amount of market research in the communities we currently serve, have analyzed bed occupancy figures for 2006 provided to us by OPM, and have included local government in our planning process. We are confident our proposal will not negatively affect bed need in our local area.

¹ CT Office of Policy and Management. "State of Connecticut Annual Nursing Home Census, Sept. 30, 2005." http://vvy.opm.state.ct.us/pdpd4/lrc/researcher/2006Feb_FactSheet.pdf, Accessed 12/1/06.

4. *The Senior Living Campus is in keeping with the State of Connecticut's Long-Term Care Plan's philosophy of "balancing the system".* With the passing of Public Act 05-14, the State Legislature made it a priority to enact policies that would "provide that individuals with long-term care needs have the option to choose and receive long-term care and support in the least restrictive, appropriate setting." The Commission on Aging, the Department of Social Services, the Department of Public Health, HUD, the Office of Policy and Management, OHCA, and other State and Federal agencies have implemented policies to help move Connecticut's long-term care system into a better balance between usage of community services and institutional care, while also promoting the purchase of private long-term care insurance policies to help conserve future Medicaid dollars. This illustrates how the State can forge ahead with partnerships with organizations like The Jewish Home to ensure the well-being of seniors and the financial viability of the system as a whole.

5. *The Senior Living Campus will increase the quality of long-term care available in Fairfield County, while satisfying an unmet need in the community.* The Jewish Home proposes to create more housing options for seniors that maximize functionality in the least restrictive setting, promotes investment in long-term care insurance products, and decreases the number of skilled nursing beds in favor of assisted living and residential care settings. Our market research tells us that the demand for this form of long-term care far outweighs the availability of this type of long-term care in Fairfield County. The other Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRC's) in Fairfield County have waitlists and do not have enough units to meet demand.

6. *The new Senior Living Campus will increase economic opportunity in Fairfield County.* Our services will expand from serving 360 to over 700 residents. There will be tremendous opportunity for new jobs and increased business in the surrounding areas.

We feel strongly that our new Senior Living Campus will be a component of the solution for Fairfield County as the local baby boomers begin to become frail and begin to need long-term care services. We have completed a considerable amount of market research and have worked closely with local government to ensure that our proposed plans meet the future needs of the population our Mission mandates we serve. However, we agree with Commissioner Mike Starkowski's position that any movement and/or reduction of skilled nursing beds must be done carefully so as not to leave any community without sufficient access to this level of care.

Enacting H.B. 5639 in conjunction with legislation such as S.B. 386, 373, and 379, Acts Concerning Nursing Facility Relocation, will allow the Department of Social Services to consider proposals for nursing home relocations or reductions of beds with the input of the communities these nursing homes were intended to serve. Such a policy allows for the evolution of more cost-effective and innovative forms of long-term care, while remaining responsive to the needs of local communities. It will also allow the Department of Social Services to remain largely in control of our changing long-term care environment, promoting a better balance of long-term care options in the State.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to working with the Human Services Committee and the State Legislature to make our vision for a more balanced and cost-effective long-term care system in Fairfield County a reality.