

Senator Harris, Representative Villano, and members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Louise Eldredge and I represent Lyon Manor, a residential care facility. I asked Senator Gugliemo to submit this bill. I will be speaking about PSB 886: An act concerning payments by the Department of Social Services to residential care facilities.

As a residential care facility, Lyon Manor provides for disabled and elderly people. We are held to the same standards as nursing homes and rehabilitation facilities. We are regulated by Department of Social Services. The interim rate per person is reimbursed to our facility, according to the living expense regulated by DSS. The sources of their income are SSDI, VA benefits, and retirement pensions. These are added up, and DSS makes up the difference for the complete Medicaid benefits package.

Upon admittance, the resident is encouraged to agree to have Lyon Manor represent he or she, as a payee representative. This allows Lyon Manor to receive benefits directly. The problem lies when the resident uses Lyon manor to qualify for the full Medicaid benefits package, including cash assistance. The resident then has the right to change the address where the checks are sent. They then have the funds diverted to an EBT account, and choose not to pay room and board. They have a debit card, which they use to withdraw cash and spend it on whatever they choose. Many times, they choose not to pay for their care. This is fraud of our system. Many of the people we take care of are mentally and/or physically ill. They need care because they cannot manage finances, especially when there is a history of alcohol and drug abuse. When given access to large amounts of money, they can't chose what is best for them. In addition to this, when the books are audited at the end of the year, the facility is penalized for non-paying residents. As a tax-payer and a care-giver, I see this as appalling. Something has to be done to prevent this.

Also, in many cases, court appointed conservators will choose not to pay the bills, and the facility cannot recoup any funds or evict for non-payment. I feel this is a great injustice for the residents who pay their bills, the taxpayers who work hard every day, and facility owners who put their all into caring for the disabled and elderly. If this act is incorporated, it will be very beneficial to our disabled and our facilities, who care for them. Medicaid funding, for board and care facilities, saves the State of Connecticut money because the rates are much lower than skilled nursing facilities. Many residents do not require skilled nursing facilities, and only assisted living environments meet the care requirements for these people. It allows them to live in a specific environment, and at the same time, they can maintain a higher quality of life, because they still have freedoms that nursing homes do not allow.