

**Human Services Committee  
Public Hearing of March 13, 2007**

**Testimony of Donna Cunningham, LPN, employee at Marathon  
Healthcare Center of Waterbury, in support of Raised Bill #1336 ("An  
Act Concerning The Operation of Nursing Homes During Periods of  
Receivership.")**

Hello, members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Donna Cunningham and I am a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN). I have been an LPN for the past 32 years and work as a "charge nurse" at the Marathon of Waterbury Nursing Home.

I ask you to support Bill # 1336 to protect nursing home residents, and their right to remain in the nursing home that they are comfortable with, during periods of state receivership.

In the past six (6) years I have seen first hand what happens when receivership works: nursing facilities stay open while a sale can be completed and patient care is given the highest priority. Unfortunately, I have also seen the chaos and trauma caused to patients when the State doesn't allow a Receiver to be appointed quickly enough or for enough time to complete a sale of the nursing home. A facility that announces plans to close or files bankruptcy will often close in less than three (3) months. But when a Receiver is temporarily appointed the nursing home usually gets sold to another nursing home operator 6-9 months later without disruption to the residents and staff.

When I worked at Olympus of Waterbury the facility surprised me, 170 other employees, and 150 residents when it announced bankruptcy and plans to close in 2001. We asked the State to appoint a Receiver, it choose not to do so and the nursing home was closed in less than 90 days. Our residents were upset, crying daily, and felt pressured to find another nursing home often 30 or 40 miles away from their home. One resident was left for several weeks as the only patient in the building because he was too upset over the closure, and wanted a receiver to work at keeping the facility open, so he refused to leave until the last day.

The other Olympus homes did get a Receiver appointed quickly, the Receiver stabilized the homes and patients were not forced to move, census did not drop because residents weren't panicked under a threat to close. Several bids were then received by different nursing home operators and the process took more than 6 months because there were several interested buyers. The sale was completed and those nursing homes remain open today. If those facilities needed a receiver appointed today they would close, because the current system only allows 90 days for a sale to be completed or the nursing home closes and that just isn't enough time.

After Olympus of Waterbury closed, I began working as a charge nurse at Rose Gardens Nursing Center, also in Waterbury. This facility had a history of bankruptcy and financial

problems and our paychecks were bouncing. The State acted quickly and placed the home in receivership – and again patients were fine, there was no upset or chaos and a smooth transition through the sale occurred more than 6 months later. Rose Gardens remains open today and continues to provide care for its residents.

In April of last year, Five Star/Waterbury Health Care Center suddenly announced to me and 180 workers and 150 residents that it planned to close in 90 days. Our residents were deeply affected by this and wrote letters to the Governor and held press conferences asking for a receiver so that we could remain open for enough time to look for a buyer to keep the nursing home open. The State didn't appoint a receiver but Five Star agreed to allow time for a sale. The sale to Marathon HealthCare Group was completed 7 months later and although our residents and staff are pleased with the outcome, more than 40 residents were discharged and felt forced to find other nursing homes after the closure announcement because the State did not get a receiver to protect the residents during the difficult time.

In my experience when a Receiver is appointed quickly and isn't limited to a 90 day period, the nursing home residents are well-cared for and usually a sale gets completed within 6 or 9 months. When a Receiver isn't appointed or is limited to 90 days, the facility closes and patients, their families, and the workers are the ones who suffer.