

Human Services Committee, Public Hearing 3/11/2008
*Testimony re: **SB662** and **HB5910***
Jennifer Smith, District 1199/SEIU Healthcare

Bill #662: AN ACT CONCERNING MEDICAID ELIGIBILITY & REIMBURSEMENT

We urge you to support Bill #662 — specifically the change to **Section 10, subsection A**. (We do, however, have concerns about Section 11, which I address at the end.)

Currently, state statute prohibits the Department of Social Services (DSS) from granting new nursing home bed permits except in five specific circumstances (as outlined in subsection A.)

The original purpose of this “moratorium” — created in 1991 and in place until 2012 — has been to prevent nursing home owners (who ultimately are in competition with each other for patients) from over-building in particular geographic regions and state-wide. This leads to an over-abundance of capitol cost reimbursement request on the State, and ultimately is not fiscally healthy for either the nursing home industry or the State.

We support the creation of a sixth circumstance — allowing a limited number of beds (up to 60) to be created or transferred WITHIN city limits in municipalities of 125,000 or more. We feel this additional circumstance maintains the original intention of the moratorium, while also allowing DDS to address a specific need.

Nursing homes in the New Haven-area have a very high “census,” (a.k.a. occupancy rate) — on any given day close to 99% of nursing home beds in the city are filled. New Haven-area hospitals often cannot discharge patients to local nursing homes because there is no bed available.

The Jewish Home for the Aged (JHA) of New Haven is a 226-bed nursing home and has been here since 1914. District 1199 represents the

licensed practical nurses, certified nursing assistants, service and maintenance workers at JHA. Many of the residents here are from the immediate area and have family in the surrounding neighborhoods. Like most urban nursing homes, a disproportionate number of residents here rely on Medicaid for their care, so there are fewer dollars and incentives for dramatic changes. (*In Cost Year 2006, JHA was 85% Medicaid – the state average was 67%, according to DSS.*)

Creating this sixth exemption will allow the Jewish Home of New Haven to maintain the current nursing home while also creating a new, 60-bed Green House-model facility specifically inside the city of New Haven.

Passing this bill will ensure vital beds will be retained (and even expanded slightly) and quality jobs will be maintained at both locations. Keeping the beds inside the city not only ensures that this population continues to be served, but also avoids negatively impacting other nursing homes in the surrounding area.

We know that this committee is also considering other bills that grapple with developing Connecticut's long-term care options for the future. We support the move to more people-focused, less-institutional care options. But this bill language fills an immediate need that also fits into the long-term goals.

Section 11, Subsection (d)2: We oppose this new language that would limit the scope of DSS audits of service providers to the prior two calendar years *and* to 200 claims. At time when reports of financial mismanagement at certain providers are in the news every week, this language seems to go against the tide calling for more accountability and transparency.

**Raised Bill #5910: AN ACT CONCERNING LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

We support Bill #5910 to increase the Legislature's ability to oversee how the DSS programs and initiatives you approve are actually being implemented.

On more than one occasion, a great-sounding program is created by the Legislature and everyone goes home happy...until we hear months or even years later that DSS never got it off the ground for whatever reason. Those reasons may be legitimate, sometimes not. The point is that finding out so long after the fact does no one any good.

Expanding legislative oversight will help:

- Build confidence that DSS is carrying out directives of Legislature;
- Keep legislators "in the loop" and better understand the problems that may be slowing down implementation;
- Increase communication between legislators, DSS, and stakeholders about how tax dollars are being used and available public services.