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Senator Doyle, Representative Walker and Members of the Human Services Committee

Re: SB 957, AAC MEDICAID ELIGIBILITY FOR PERSONS LIVING IN RESIDENTIAL CARE HOMES

I would like to let you know the importance of Bill # 957 that would allow residential care home residents who are over the State Supplement income limit to be allowed to remain in Residential Care by establishing a special needs trust.

As a Director of Residential Care and a Geriatric Social Worker, I consider myself an advocate for elderly people. On many occasions during my tenure as a Director, I have witnessed elderly people having to move from their homes in residential care to skilled nursing facilities for no other reason than not meeting income guidelines for the State Supplement program.

As legislators and lawmakers, I encourage you to look at this bill from a humanistic, but also financial perspective. It should be our goal as Americans to help care for our elderly in the least restrictive setting possible. Elderly people living in residential care are able to remain independent in home-like settings that promote independence.

Moving these people from an RCH to a SNF when their medical condition has not changed is disruptive to these people and traumatic for the individual and their families. Furthermore, the cost of skilled nursing care is astronomical. People in this situation can be cared for appropriately in a residential care home at a far less significant cost to the government. While I do not have exact figures, I imagine the cost of residential care is less than half the cost of skilled nursing.

Currently in The Mary Wade Home, I have a resident who has resided with us for about a year. She has dementia and is living happily in our home-like environment. Her family elected to move her into our home knowing that when she ran out of private funds she would not qualify for the State Supplement. They frequently check with me about this bill in the hopes that they will not have to move her to a nursing home when her funds run out.

Today I am asking for your assistance in helping to ensure this lady and others do not have to be moved from their homes and that you promote a bill that will allow elderly citizens and their families to have greater choice when trying to find a dignified setting to reside.

Tracy Gilbert, MSW
Director of Resident Services
The Mary Wade Home