



## GEER NURSING AND REHABILITATION CENTER

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Good afternoon Senator Harp and Representative Geragosian and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is John Horstman, I am the administrator and Chief Operating Officer of Geer Nursing & Rehabilitation Center in Canaan, CT. Geer is a 120 bed, non-profit nursing home with a 40 year history. Geer Nursing shares its campus with independent housing, assisted living, adult day care, and we offer the only Dial-A-Ride program in 9 surrounding towns. The campus employs over 300 people full and part time, with 200 of those at the nursing home.

I am writing to ask that you take a strong position against the proposal from the Governor to cut nursing home Medicaid rates by 2% as suggested in the Governor's most recent State Budget Deficit Mitigation Plan.

This Committee should recognize that this unsustainable proposal comes on the heels of a zero Medicaid increase in 2008; very deep cuts of hundreds of millions of Medicaid dollars to Connecticut nursing homes in the recently adopted two year Connecticut State Budget; and cuts in Medicare reimbursement that took effect in October, 2009. Additionally, all Connecticut nursing homes face the near certain prospect of even further federal Medicare cuts with the adoption of health care reform legislation pending in Congress.

The Medicare cuts on October 1, 2009 reduced payments to Geer by over \$100,000. The proposed Medicare cuts will cost Geer approximately another \$200,000-225,000.

Geer has already lost five jobs through attrition and they are not being filled. Another three people have been laid off. A 2% cut will result in a reduction of another five to six positions. The proposed Medicare cuts will result in 12-14 positions being eliminated.

These are good jobs with full medical benefits. Jobs that our state needs and jobs that our staff and their families need. But most importantly, our residents need these positions filled. It takes many hands to properly care for nursing home residents who want their call bells answered quickly, their meals served hot and their medications given on time. That all happens, but only when there is enough staff.

The excellent quality of care that Geer is known for will be jeopardized if our Medicaid funding is further reduced. We must meet very strict Federal and State regulations, every day, but neither the Federal or State government is willing to pay the full bill for those services.

I have spent the last 38 years as an administrator in Connecticut nursing homes. When I speak with my peers at other homes, I hear fear and uncertainty. I am told by many, both for profit and non-profit nursing homes, that they are teetering on the brink of bankruptcy. A 2% reduction in Medicaid may be all that is necessary to put a large number of Connecticut nursing homes out of business. That means the loss of jobs and tax revenues, but more importantly, it means the loss of a frail, sick, elderly person's "home". And believe me, the nursing home is their home. The staff are their friends and the residents and staff care deeply for each other. Imagine how that resident feels when they are forced to leave their home and their friends to enter another nursing home where they don't know anyone. This is not the way our elderly should be treated. These are Connecticut citizens who worked hard all of their lives to build our communities and they deserve the best possible care.

John Horstman  
Administrator/COO