

# *iCare*

Good Evening members of the Appropriations committee-

My name is Chris Wright and with over 20 years experience in this business, I am President of iCare Health Management and an owner of 9 Skilled Nursing Facilities located in Manchester, Hartford, Farmington, Meriden, East Windsor and Bloomfield. I am also here representing 1,270 nursing home residents and approximately 1,800 employees who reside and work, respectively, in our 9 nursing homes. We purchased all 9 of these facilities out of State Receivership, and all of them have District 1199 Union Contracts expiring March 15, 2009.

My organization and I are very passionate and dedicated to providing quality of care to our residents. Our dedication to quality care is evidenced by the fact that currently 3 of our 9 facilities have a 5 Star rating, the highest score under the new CMS quality nursing home 1-5 scale. In addition, 5 of our 9 facilities have received a Quality First Award from the American Health Care Association, recognizing our efforts to promote and provide quality care to long-term care residents.

On behalf of our residents, staff and family members, I am

DEEPLY troubled by Governor Rell's proposed State Budget whereby there is yet again a proposed ZERO Medicaid rate increase for nursing homes for the next TWO Years. This is especially troubling since the nursing homes received a zero cost of living increase last year, in 2008. The last Medicaid rate increase was in July 2007, nearly 2 years ago! This aspect of the Governor's budget proposal is simply a disgrace and totally unacceptable. Our frail, elderly, and disabled Connecticut citizens deserve more than this!

You know the facts. Nursing home residents face significant health problems and can no longer care for themselves. They reside in our nursing homes because they need help and they totally depend on our care in order to live as productive, safe and healthy lives as possible.

With several of our homes located in urban areas with over 90% Medicaid residents, it is simply impossible to remain solvent and to absorb ZERO Medicaid rate increases for the next 2 years!

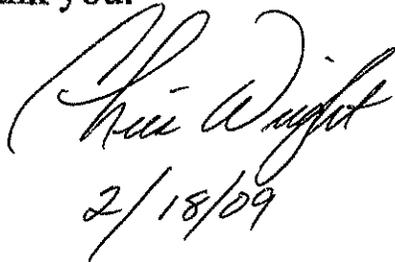
Without a reasonable increase, nursing homes that provide quality care are in serious financial jeopardy, and there will certainly be a significant loss of more Connecticut jobs!

We at iCare have worked hard to improve the quality of care in our facilities and preserve jobs for many employees who contribute to the state's economy. We have kept our commitment to our

employees under the last 4-year union contract expiring March 15, even though the promises were not kept by the Governor and the Legislature to give adequate yearly Medicaid rate increases to avoid a strike. Like many other nursing home employers we honored wage increases negotiated by the union, but received only small increases during 2 of the 4 contract years. We honored the 2008 wage increases without receiving a Medicaid rate increase. We simply can not sustain wage increases without increases in the Medicaid rates.

As our elected officials and representatives, I respectfully ask that you FIX this budget problem....we must at a minimum have 3-4% annual cost of living increases to survive and preserve jobs and quality care! If not fixed, then regrettably you will certainly see more nursing home closures, State funded receiverships and Bankruptcies, which will cost the citizens of Connecticut more money than funding annual cost of living increases. Not to mention the displacement of many helpless nursing home residents. Thank you.

Chris Wright



2/18/09