

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

Opposition to HB 5232, AAC Transfer or Discharge of Residential Care Home Patients

My name is Rhonda Boisvert and I am the Past President of the Connecticut Association of Residential Care Homes. I also own and help to operate Pleasant View Manor, an 18-bed home in Watertown and Shailerville Manor, a 15-bed home in Haddam. The average size of a residential care home is 23 beds.

I and others strive to provide a home-like setting for the elderly and persons with mental disabilities to live in the community. We are a non-medical model and many families have been providing these services for generations. (Our homes have residents and not "patients" as the title of the bill infers.) We provide a home for those individuals who cannot live independently. Our services include 24-hour supervision, meals, laundry and housekeeping, assistance with some activities of daily living, transportation and companionship for the residents.

Many of the individuals (at least three-quarters) receive state assistance through the Aged, Blind and Disabled Program (State Supplement) at the Department of Social Services. Our rates are very low and have been capped during these difficult economic times.

The procedure for an involuntary discharge or transfer is rare but at times necessary. It is only done when all other circumstances have failed. To add extra burdens to the already cumbersome process would not be good for all parties.

There are basically three reasons why a home would involuntarily discharge a resident: the individual's every day needs cannot be met such as a change in the person's medical condition; the resident refuses to pay the appropriate rent (in small homes like mine, this financial burden is great); the person's mental status interferes with the safety of the other residents and staff. The last is the most common reason for a discharge.

The present system for an involuntary discharge or transfer is frustrating to all involved. To add extra burdens - such as anyone may be an "advocate" for the person and the time to reach a decision may be lengthened - will be detrimental to all involved. Currently, it takes time and money and months to resolve a disagreement. The longer the process, the greater the increase in liability for a home.

Please understand. Due to the process, a home does not make a frivolous decision to begin an involuntary discharge. However, if a disruptive or unstable individual remains in a home, it tells the staff and other residents: "We don't care about you." The rights of all involved must be taken into consideration not just one individual's. We who operate residential care homes believe that we are advocates also for the elderly and disabled.

Vote "NO" on SB 5232.