



# Sister Anne Virginie Grimes Health Center

A member of the Saint Raphael Healthcare System

1354 Chapel Street, New Haven, CT 06511

TESTIMONY BY JOHN TARUTIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SISTER ANNE VIRGINIE GRIMES HEALTH CENTER

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

Thursday, March 11, 2010

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 5398, AN ACT CONCERNING A PILOT PROGRAM TO TRANSFER  
HOSPITAL PATIENTS WHO RECEIVE MEDICAID BENEFITS TO NURSING HOMES IN A TIMELY MANNER

Senator Doyle, Representative Walker and Human Services Committee Members,

My name is John Tarutis, I am the Executive Director at the Sister Anne Virginie Grimes Health Center a 125 bed skilled nursing facility in New Haven which is part of the Saint Raphael Healthcare System. I am also the Administrative Director for Inpatient Physical Rehabilitation Services at the Hospital of Saint Raphael. Due to these responsibilities, I have the unique opportunity to experience many of the challenges facing Connecticut's health delivery system.

I am here today to request your support of House Bill 5398, An Act Concerning a Pilot Program to Transfer Hospital Patients Who Receive Medicaid Benefits to Nursing Homes in a Timely Manner. On any given day in every Connecticut hospital, there are a number of patients who are Medicaid or Medicaid-eligible recipients for which the hospital staff cannot find a long-term care placement. These patients are medically cleared and able to be cared for in a lesser level of care, however, mitigating circumstances impede discharge. Often these patients require: complex nursing care or expensive intravenous medication, or require special equipment such as ventilators, or have behavioral issues, and, often, a combination of all of the above. Many extended care facilities are not equipped or lack the clinical model to care for the complex needs of such patients. So the patient lingers in the acute hospital consuming exorbitant resources while waiting for a long-term care placement. At the same time, hospital emergency departments are often not able to place patients into the acute hospital setting due to the lack of available hospital beds.

The intent of Bill #5398 is to create a pilot program to remedy this scenario. The ultimate goal is fairly straight forward – the development of a process which creates an incentive for a skilled-nursing facility to accept inpatient Medicaid patients with complex health needs. This process will allow the patients to be cared for in the most appropriate setting to meet their healthcare needs.

This Bill creates a platform for dialogue, discussion, and exploration into improving the health of Connecticut's health system and economy. It is anticipated that dialogue and collaboration would occur between the hospitals, nursing homes, other health care entities, as needed, the Department of Social Services, and the Department of Public Health.

As we speak, both New Haven Hospitals are currently caring for a roster of long-stay patients that have already consumed millions of dollars in health care and who, more importantly, have been waiting in a hospital bed for a long-term care placement for several weeks and, sometimes, several months. At the same time, some area nursing homes do not have a full census and many are in a fragile financial state. Should this pilot program be successful, we can relieve our hospitals of millions of dollars in uncompensated care, create open bed space for the emergency room patient who truly needs to be placed in the acute setting, provide support to the state's struggling nursing home industry by bolstering their census, and at the same time, save the State money. Medicaid patients and Medicaid-eligible patients should not have to spend unnecessary weeks or months in the hospital while they wait for an appropriate nursing home placement.

I hope you will support this effort and House Bill #5398 – the concept holds much potential. Thank you for raising the bill and for the opportunity to speak with you today.