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Testimony regarding Proposed S.B. No.149: An Act Concerning Improved Social Worker To Resident Ratios In Nursing Home

Dear Members of the Aging Committee:

I am the Director of Social Services at The Reservoir Health and Rehab in West Hartford, CT. It is a 75 bed, skilled nursing facility. I am also a member of the National Association of Social Workers.

As a professional social worker in a nursing home I strongly urge the committee members to support this proposed bill. The current ratio is one social worker per 120 patients. This is too large of a case load to adequately support the patients and their families' needs.

A social worker who is employed at a nursing home has a variety of responsibilities. Social workers deal with all patients psychosocial needs. We are patient advocates. We support not only the patient, but their families as well. We educate staff, patients, and families regarding diseases and the impact of these diseases on their emotional well being.

Our patients have a variety of psychosocial needs. We find many of our patients have issues with depression and anxiety because of their situations. Most are dealing with many health issues and end of life issues that require emotional support. Social workers also assist with discharge planning when appropriate and need to make numerous referrals to be sure Connecticut residents have suitable services in the community to be successful living independently, thus decreasing the need to be readmitted to the hospital or another home.

Social workers also need to complete assessments and document in the medical record in accordance with the Department of Health guidelines and the federal government. The Center for Medicare/Medicaid Services has rolled out a new Minimum Data Set (MDS) which is the tool used by all nursing homes for reimbursement.

The new MDS 3.0 is more client-centered than the previous one. The social worker is required to conduct a lengthy interview with the patients to complete the MDS. We ask them various questions regarding their mood and behaviors, interests, as well as demographic information. Then all this information needs to be inputted into the computer. It is a time consuming process. Unfortunately these new requirements are forcing nursing home social worker to be unable to give needed attention to our patients. The residents living in our nursing homes are the ones suffering because a social workers

case load is too large to give our patients and our families the support and personal time they need and deserve.

If the ratio was decreased, the patients residing in these homes would get the needed services. Many are facing the end of their life or are scared because of multiple health issues and benefit from a social worker who has the time to assess their level of depression or anxiety and develop an intervention with the patient to increase their quality of life.

I thank you for your consideration on this important issue,

Maggie Meehan, BSW