

Greenwich Nursing & Healthcare Registry, Inc.

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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON AGING
REGARDING RAISED BILL NO. 5439
AN ACT CONCERNING THE EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF PERSONS
PROVIDING HOMEMAKER SERVICES, COMPANION SERVICES AND
HOMEMAKER-HOME HEALTH AIDE SERVICES.

March 13, 2012

Senator Prague, Representative Serra and other members of the committee, our names are Crystal Ramsey and Kathleen Schluensen we are co-owners of the Greenwich Nursing and Health Care Registry. The Nurses Registry has been serving Greenwich and the surrounding communities for more than 80 years. We serve a range of patients from pediatrics through geriatrics and the terminally ill. We are Registered Nurses with 60 years of combined nursing experience and 44 years of combined Nurse Registry experience.

We are here to testify in opposition of Raised Bill No. 5439 and in favor of the Registry Model. Retention in any business is a sign of workers satisfaction. Many of our registry members have an excess of 20 years service. They remain with us because of job autonomy. The Registry offers our members:

- Flexibility - the caregiver can structure their work schedule
- Allows the caregiver to accept or decline assignments
- Schedule time off at their discretion
- Average compensation rate \$20/per hour in this area (many of our fulltime nurse aides earned more than 50K in 2011)

This business model does not work for every caregiver however; it works extremely well for others.

The Greenwich Nursing and Healthcare Registry is an integral part of our community rendering quality healthcare. Our patients have come to trust and depend on our services because we offer our patients

- The ability to choose their caregiver(s)
- Continuity of care eliminating multiple caregivers
- Knowledge that all caregivers referred have been thoroughly screened: complete criminal background checks, credential verifications, personal and professional references, motor vehicle checks, social security verifications
- Cost effectiveness
- Schedule management
- Registered Nurse on-call 24 hours 7 days per week for initiation of services, schedule changes, cancellations and concerns
- Assistance with filing insurance claims
- Ability to cancel/change at any time without penalty
- Direct pay to caregiver no fee from the Registry

To illustrate the effectiveness of the Registry Model here are 2 patient examples.

Example #1: Patient, "Mary" 50 years old suffered from a progressive neurological disease became ventilator dependant. She was referred by the local Visiting Nurse Service who was unable to cover the patient. Her options were a nursing home that could accommodate a ventilator patient or registered nurses at home 24 hours 7 days per week. Her healthcare policy had a lifetime cap. Our goal was to stretch the healthcare dollars for as long as possible and give the patient the continuity of care she required utilizing a small team of nurses. This was achieved and the patient remained at home for 6 years until she passed away. At a cost of \$46.00/per hour for the Registry assigned independent nurse as contrasted to the traditional agency rate of \$100 - \$135/per hour. Without insurance coverage the couple's savings would have been depleted and the patient would probably be forced to go on Medicaid and enter a nursing home usually at tax payer expense.

Example # 2: A recent patient from Greenwich was referred by her local priest, Power of Attorney. Mrs. "A", a 96 year old lady who fell and fractured her hip was deemed unsafe to return home without help, especially because she was the sole caregiver for her 72 year old developmentally disabled son. Mrs. "A" and her son shared a small 5 room home that had not been regularly maintained. The first aide we sent declined to return due to unsanitary conditions. The second aide arrived, embraced the challenge and started to organize and clean. Mrs. "A" and her son were safely cared for in their home for three years until a facility could accept them both. The Registry was able to meet their needs by unitizing a small team of aides who provided continuity.

In addition, the Greenwich Registry also provides

- Per diem services to local schools
- Per diem services to local physician offices
- Nursing services provided to our local diabetic children's camp as needed
- One-on-one coverage for hospitalized patients deem "at risk"
- Supplemental care for hospice patient (respite care for family caregivers)
- Accompany patients who need to travel

The passage of Raised Bill No. 5439 will result in

- Elimination of Nursing Registries in the State of CT
- Loss of jobs
- Significant increase in the underground workers resulting in loss of tax revenue
- Loss of oversight
- Increased risk to the frail elderly and vulnerable patients
- Disruption of patient services
- Increased cost
- Increase necessity of institutionalized care which is often higher in cost and covered by tax payer dollars

We support and adhere to the regulations of bill SB911 effective January 1, 2012. We are open to regulations to improve our service, better protect our patients, and provide a quality work experience for our caregivers. We need to remain independent to care for our patients with continuity of care, choice, and cost effective solutions to a complex problem.

We are willing to work with all agencies to address issues but if we are forced to close, the residents of Connecticut loose a valuable service and caregivers loose their career options.

Our community has lost the Greenwich Hospital Home Care Service and most recently, the Visiting Nurse and Hospice of Stamford and the Hospice residence. Now we are threatened with the lost of the Registry, this will severely limit patient choices and services in our area.

In this economic climate we must protect the caregiver's jobs and affordable patient options. Thank you for your time and consideration. We would be pleased to answer any questions. Please contact us at (203) 869-4050.