

The Connecticut Hospice
Testimony State Legislative Committee
March 16, 2012

My name is John Drakos. I have volunteered at The Connecticut Hospice for 10 years. I am just one of some 500 volunteers who are required to take 9 weeks of training. The volunteer department is opposed to this bill, because it would lower the standards.

There is a fundamental human good that The Connecticut Hospice provides to their patients and patient families. We live in a time when we hear from multiple and diverse sources about what is best for us. Now we hear of the possibility that the Hospice model will be diluted down. And we fear patients and families will receive sub standard care when only profit becomes the goal.

The Connecticut Hospice mission is not very complex. It is simply to provide the best palliative and supportive care to patients and families during their time of immeasurable pain, stress and sadness. Every department at The Connecticut Hospice contributes to bringing peace and comfort to those most in need.

I can attest that I have never been around a more caring and professional group of individuals. I witness the clinical staff - the doctors, nurses, cna's, pharmacy - all providing a high level of medical care with kindness and respect and an awareness of patient dignity. That's why many families refer to this group of people as angels. It's true.

The Social Work staff provide support to patients and especially to families when most are at a very desperate time in their lives, not knowing what to do or expect. The staff counsels and guides patient families to better cope with what is happening to their loved one. It is hard to quantify, but you know without this group of caring individuals, The Connecticut Hospice would not be able to offer the exceptional care it provides.

Spiritual care is very important to patients and families at the Connecticut Hospice and is provided under the guidance of Hospice Chaplain the Rev. Charles Woody. Reverend Woody with his beautiful voice can often be heard throughout the hallways singing a hymn or a show tune . He lifts up those of all faiths whose hearts are filled with sadness.

The Arts department. You might ask what does an arts department provide to patients and families. The Connecticut Hospice is blessed to have talented individuals who actually go bedside with patients and provide them with art supplies to draw or paint. This too is a form of providing comfort and compassion. The arts department is rich in providing an ongoing group of musicians who perform on a regular basis and are most welcome especially during the holidays.

There are other departments at The Connecticut Hospice from security to maintenance to kitchen to administrative, all who contribute to the fundamental goal of The Connecticut Hospice - bringing the highest level of care to patients and their families.

What I am saying is that every component is critical to the functioning of The Connecticut Hospice. The Connecticut Hospice - the first hospice in America - is a gift to the citizens of Connecticut. Please see that all hospices to come maintain the same status, including for the pediatric population. I actually work across from the pediatric suite. Our pediatrician Doctor Joe MacNamara commented "*The quality of care that my patients receive from the whole Connecticut Hospice Interdisciplinary team including nurses, aides, social work, the chaplain, the nutritionist, clinical pharmacist, the arts and dedicated volunteers is exceptional. Kudos to the great care that our pediatric patients, their siblings and families receive. The counsel and caring provided to the parents and caregivers of these children have been unparalleled. My pedi patients have needed multiple high-tech/high-touch intervention 24/7. The Connecticut Hospice Hospital provides*

vigilant staffing, the skill and the experience to manage these complex kids with serious life-limiting diseases, in addition to providing the level of understanding and compassion the family requires. The pediatric population is very unique and the standard of care provided at The Connecticut Hospice is definitely needed for these poor kids as they go through this difficult part of life's journey."

Respectfully,

John P. Drakos