

Bonhomme, Penny

From: Edele [unionmemorialchurch@gmail.com]

Sent: Thursday, March 15, 2012 7:54 PM

To: PHC Testimony

Subject: Proposed Hospice Regulations

The Rev. Dr. Blaine Edele, Ph.D.
Union Memorial Church
58 Church Street
Stamford, CT 06906

March 15, 2012

Dear Senator Terry B. Gerratana and Representative Elizabeth B. Ritter,

I have served as the Pastor of the Union Memorial Church in Stamford for the past twenty years. I have ministered to numerous parishioners who have died under the care of the former Rosenthal Hospice in Stamford, various nursing homes in the area and regional hospitals. I have concluded that the quality of care offered in a residential hospice ministered more compassionately, competently and consistently to both patients and families who sought end-of-life care. Therefore, I have a keen interest in the pending bill H.B. No. 5499 (Raised) An Act Concerning Regulations Relating to Hospice Care.

I appreciate that the legislature must address a tension between those advocating new regulations, which reportedly will increase access to hospice care, and those supporting the existing regulations, which reportedly will preserve the high standard of hospice residential care in our State. I understand that those in favor of the existing regulations cite that Connecticut is a national leader in providing hospice care. I also understand that those in favor of the current regulations cited that 80% (or sometimes cited as 90%) of Connecticut residents live within a 30 minute drive (sometimes cited as a 60 minute drive) to hospice agencies.

I applaud the residential hospice services in Connecticut for achieving such highly acclaimed standards. In light of the recent closure of the Rosenthal Hospice in Stamford, I question the degree of accessibility to hospice care in our State. May I cite a heart-breaking story to illustrate my position.

At the Public Hearing on the closure of the Rosenthal Residence in Stamford, a middle aged couple spoke mournfully about their late father's death. For several months they couple had provided care for their aged parent in their own home. They promised to care for him until his dying hour. When they heard that the Rosenthal Hospice might close, they decided to send their informed father to the Branford Hospice, which, can be as much as a 90 minute drive on Interstate 95 from Stamford when heavily congested. They tearfully watched attendants transfer their father into an ambulance and promised to meet him at the Hospice Residence in Branford as soon as possible. To their dismay, they later learned that he died in the ambulance, apart from his beloved family. I imagine that the elderly man could have died at any time in any place, but how sad that ,due to commuting distance from Stamford, he died away from his devoted family.

This story is a dire example, but it serves to illustrate in a severe degree the importance of providing accessibility to residential hospice care across our State.

A pressing issue for me is not exclusively if and to what extent these proposed regulations may reduce the quality of hospice care in our State. The issue for me is will these proposed regulations encourage the development of residential hospice facilities across the State for the many patients who currently face the end-of-life in nursing homes and hospitals. For families to drive to the Hospice in Branford from Sharon, Greenwich, Pomfret, or Norwich on a daily, or even regular basis, during prolonged periods of caring for their dying loves would be a terrible burden on those families. When a caregiver wants to be the daily companion for their dying loved ones, a two-hour or more round trip is prohibitive. I believe that encouraging quality hospice for more throughout our State, rather than offering nationally acclaimed care only for those fortunate to live close to the center of the State is a most just position.

I urge you to endorse these proposed regulations.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Dr. Blaine Edele, Ph.D.

3/15/2012