



TESTIMONY

BEFORE THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

H.B. 5499 AN ACT CONCERNING REGULATIONS RELATING TO HOSPICE CARE

March 16, 2012

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Tracy Wodatch. I am a registered nurse with nearly 30 years' hospice and home care experience and the Vice President of Clinical and Regulatory Services for the Connecticut Association for Home Care and Hospice (CAHCH), a non-profit trade organization that provides leadership, advocacy and educational membership support to all the licensed and certified hospice providers in Connecticut.

On behalf of CAHCH and 27 of its 28 hospice provider members, I am writing in **support** of H.B. 5499 An Act Concerning Regulations Relating to Hospice Care but request specific language changes to section (a) which will be outlined further in my testimony. For more than two years, CAHCH and the licensed hospice providers in Connecticut have been working collaboratively with the Department of Public Health (DPH) to develop proposed revisions to Section 19a-122b-1 to 19a-122b-14 Hospice Facility regulations which are based on the current (2008) Medicare Hospice Conditions of Participation.

These regulations will open up access to all levels of hospice care but specifically allow for hospice facilities or residences. The current regulations (19-13-D4b) are for hospital based hospices only. They do not support the small home-like hospice facility or residence, a model that is prevalent throughout the United States. Of the 5150 hospice providers nationally, 21.7% have hospice facilities or residences (just over one in five)-*source: The 2010 Medicare Facts and Figures report*. In Connecticut, there are only two (6.7%) facilities but they are licensed under CT regulations 19-13-D4b (Short-term hospitals, special, hospice) which were written 35 years ago for CT Hospice to be provided in the hospital setting.

The proposed regulations will not modify the current licensing of CT Hospice in Branford, yet will allow other hospice providers throughout the state to offer terminally-ill patients access to all levels of hospice services both in home and in facilities within their own communities. They will allow for small hospice residences (usually 12 or fewer beds) to be built in areas around the state where accessibility to all levels of hospice care is currently a problem (Greater Danbury, Southeastern CT and Fairfield County to name a few). These hospice residences will be close to home and convenient to friends and family with less worry about travelling distances/hours to visit. They will also offer enhanced hospice care provided by hospice designated and trained

staff in a home-like setting (not a nursing home or a hospital). Overall, they will ensure greater patient and family satisfaction at end-of-life.

Should H.B. 5499 be passed, it will surely expedite the implementation of the DPH proposed hospice facility regulations. However, as written, H.B 5499 needs the following revisions to meet the intended goals of the proposed regulations which is to offer all levels of hospice care in all settings. In section (a) “a hospice pursuant to 42 USC 1395x...”, delete the remaining portion of this sentence and the next sentence (lines 2 and 3 of section a) and the following language should be inserted, “**shall be authorized to operate a hospice facility, including a hospice residence, for the purpose of providing hospice services for terminally ill patients who are in need of hospice home care or hospice inpatient services. The hospice facility, including a hospice residence, must be able to provide the following levels of hospice care: routine, general inpatient, continuous or respite.**” Continue thereafter with the next sentence, “The residence shall provide a homelike...”.

Bringing hospice care in Connecticut into the 21st century is sorely needed. Please pass H.B. 5499 with the recommended language changes as it will ensure access to the full complement of hospice services for our terminally ill residents throughout Connecticut. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at wodatch@cahch.org or 203-294-7348.

Thank you,
Tracy Wodatch, RN, BSN
VP of Clinical and Regulatory Services