

March, 15, 2012

Dear Legislators,

I am unable to attend the hearing tomorrow, so I am submitting written testimony in support of the following revision to the Hospice regulations.:

Suggested Revisions for H.B.5499 section (a) after "pursuant to 42 USC 1395x" (line 6) :

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.

Resuming in the H.B. 5499 with the sentence (line 11) "The residence shall provide a homelike environment..."

As a practicing physician and Hospice Medical director in Northeast CT, I am painfully aware of how difficult it is for our hospice patients to go to a hospice residence when necessary. Currently Branford, CT is the closest hospice residence in our state. When a family is confronted with providing end of life care for a loved one, choices about where the care may be provided is often crucial. The revised hospice regulations will provide this choice. To allow for hospice residences to be built in more communities the new regulations must be approved.

At the end of life most people want to stay in their own homes, surrounded by loved ones, but sometimes this just isn't possible. If a hospice patient can't remain at home, they may have to go to a nursing home or into the hospital. Another choice is to go into a hospice residence. A hospice residence provides a home-like environment with specialized hospice care. This is a great option for patients who do not want to go into a nursing home and do not need the type of care provided in a hospital. The problem is that there are only three hospice residences in the entire state of Connecticut. If the patient is not lucky enough to live near one of the three hospice residences, their family will have to travel from as far as 2 hours away to visit. The revised hospice regulations will allow for more residences to be built throughout the state, allowing loved ones to stay locally.

Connecticut Hospice in Branford has been fighting the revised regulations. The current proposed revisions will allow Branford to continue providing care as they always have. In addition it allows other licensed hospices the opportunity to provide all levels of hospice care in their communities. There has been concern brought forward that the new regulations do not mandate a physician or pharmacist to be present in the facilities 24/7. Each Medicare certified and state licensed hospice has access to those disciplines 24/7 and the hospice medical director is available to assess a patient if necessary. Hospice is a team approach and there is ongoing input by team members, and medical issues are anticipated in advance so that crisis is avoided. The purpose of a local facility is to provide excellent and compassionate end of life care in the home or a home-like environment with the easy availability for

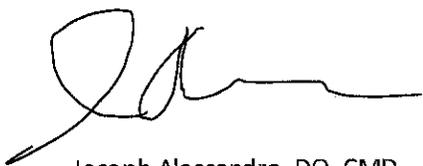
family, friends and even pets to visit. That care can happen with the entire input of all team members demonstrating excellent outcomes under the new hospice facility regulations. In addition, this model allows the family to be intimately involved until the last moment.. it allows for excellent memories that last with family forever. The social and emotional care is core to hospice and is best provided as close to home as possible.

The revised regulations allow for additional residences to be built and also focus on the increased need for hospices to evaluate quality, outcomes and compliance. The revised regulations are supported by every hospice in Connecticut except CT Hospice in Branford. Approving the revised regulations is vitally important to allow the development of additional hospice residences by licensed hospice programs throughout Connecticut.

The updated hospice facility regulations will improve access to a hospice residence in more communities. Having a nearby hospice residence will assure hospice patients and their families easy access to state of the art, compassionate patient care in a home-like environment.

As our population grows, more individuals will choose hospice care during their most vulnerable time. Access to a hospice residence in one's own community must be a choice. This choice was not available recently to a young adult who lived on his own yet when struck by a devastating terminal illness could not go back to his home. He could not go to live with his parent who had to maintain a job. He did not want to go into a "nursing home" because he was so young. He did not need to stay in the hospital because all of the technology necessary to control his symptoms could be administered at home. He had no choice in our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joseph Alessandro', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joseph Alessandro, DO, CMD