

Testimony to the Aging Committee

Presented by Bonnie Gauthier, President and CEO of Hebrew Health Care

March 4, 2014

Regarding

SB 244, An Act Increasing Home Care Provider Rates

Good morning Senator Ayala, Representative Serra, and members of the Aging Committee. My name is Bonnie Gauthier and I am the President and CEO of Hebrew Health Care, a non-sectarian, non-profit pre- and post-acute, and acute care health care system focused on serving older adults, and located in West Hartford. Throughout our 113 year history, Hebrew Health Care has evolved to meet emerging needs of senior adults; and today our constellation of services includes home and community based programs as well as long and short term institutional services: skilled nursing, chronic disease hospital and short term sub-acute (rehab) in patient services are supported and augmented by a licensed home health agency, adult day center, outpatient geriatric medical services (primary and consultative care), certified hospice and outpatient rehabilitation services. We are also participants in and applicants to the State Nursing Home Diversity RFP—and eagerly await the announcement of the outcome of that process.

I am pleased to be here today to testify in support of **Senate Bill 244, An Act Increasing Home Care Provider Rates**. This bill is critical to the continued momentum of the State's Rebalancing efforts. And the commitment of Hebrew Health Care and similar providers of a continuum of care in our state to providing alternatives to institutional care can only be sustained if those services are themselves funded solidly, beginning today, and into the future.

Most providers in the CHCPE have not received a rate increase in years: 2005 for assisted living service providers, 2007 for home delivered meals, and 2011 for adult day services. We propose that the State move quickly to strengthen this program by fostering the development of an expanded and quality network of home and community based providers so as to ensure a successful rebalancing effort. SB 244 is the mechanism which will allow this to happen.

We strongly support this bill, which would bring an immediate 2% increase in the provider rates, mandate the development of a plan for the next biennial budget to bring the rates up to adequate levels based on the cost of providing the care, and also require an annual indexing of the rates thereafter.

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In closing, we come together with our colleagues to urge the state to initiate a plan to increase and sustain reimbursement rates within the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders which will develop and support a network of quality aging services providers in the community. Without adequate reimbursement rates, new quality providers will not enter the home and community based services market, long standing quality providers will be forced to leave the market, and the state will not achieve a balanced system of long term care, services and supports.