



New England Home Care

Taking Advanced Care Home

Written Testimony Kimberly Nystrom, President

New England Home Care

Before the Aging Committee

Public Hearing Regarding SB 244

March 4, 2014

Dear Senator Ayala and Representative Serra and members of the Aging Committee, I am Kimberly Nystrom, President of New England Home Care.

We support the testimony of Deborah Hoyt, President and CEO of the Connecticut Association for Healthcare at Home. The collective concern of the association and its members is the on-going need to fund and invest in the home health care industry.

We support the overall intent of SB244 and encourage any efforts to direct increased financial resources to the home and community based sector. However, this bill discusses increased funding of the CT Home Care Program for the Elders. We request that reimbursement increases also be targeted to home health care providers under the general Medicaid program.

Support An Increase in Home Health Agency Medicaid Reimbursement to:

- **Ensure a Viable and Adequate CT Home Care Provider Network**
- **Avoid Disruption to Consumer Access to Home Care**
- **Enable DSS to Continue to Reap Cost Savings in the Medicaid Program, as Home-based Care is the Most Cost-effective Care Setting.**

New England Home Care is a long time member of the Connecticut Association for Healthcare at Home. We are a licensed and certified provider of home care, servicing over 100 towns in the provision of medical, pediatric and psychiatric home based skilled services.

I would like to highlight here the quality and value of behavioral health home care nurses.

Early Intervention = Reduction in Emergency Use and Avoidable Hospitalizations = High Quality and Low Cost

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Connecticut Licensed
Medicare/Medicaid Certified

- Psychiatric nurses are trained to assess and intervene at very early stages. We see home environmental factors of threats and violence where individuals are at high risk for negative consequences.
- As home based, early intervention specialists, we liaison with physicians, treaters and local mental health authorities to expedite appropriate interventions to avoid costly institutional care.

Skilled Assessment = Diversion from Harmful and Violent Behavior towards self and others=Quality of Life and Productive Citizens

- A skilled mental health and clinical assessment includes monitoring complex medication regimes, complicating medical conditions and risk factors which can frequently go unnoticed by those that suffer from mental illness.
- Included in these routine assessments is the presence of hallucinations, delusional thinking and the existence of suicidal and homicidal thoughts which require ongoing skilled management.

Valued Community Based Partner = Mobilized and Skilled Workforce

- We in the industry are here to collaborate and support a meaningful way to keep those with potentially unstable clinical needs safely in the community.
- Investment in the home care industry will allow ongoing innovation and training of a very large work force and focus on person centered care models such as the health home models and neighborhoods developing throughout the State.

CONCLUSION: Support an Increase in Home Health Agency Medicaid Reimbursement

Medicaid rates to home care providers has remained flat since 2007, no increases or cost of living adjustments in these 9 years while regulatory burdens escalate each year.

Over the last two sessions, the home care industry worked with state officials and legislative champions to model system which incorporates unlicensed caregivers to provide medication administration in the home environment. This new model saves the State money long term in supporting rebalancing from institutional care. For years, the home care industry has engaged in a spirit of collaboration with a solution oriented approach. To continue on this path of innovation in creating high quality cost effective models, it is essential to allocate financial resources to the home health care system through an increase in Medicaid rates or other investment models.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kimberly Nystrom, RN, JD

President, New England Home Care