

**TESTIMONY OF Sonja Zandri, Brookside Rest Home, Danbury**  
**CONCERNING**  
**HB 5030-AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES**  
**FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2015.**

**Department of Social Services-Residential Care Home Funding**  
**Appropriations Human Services Subcommittee Hearing**  
**February 14, 2014**

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Representative Abercrombie and members of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Human Services, my name is Sonja Zandri. I am an active member of the Connecticut Association of Residential Care Home and owner of Brookside Rest Home, Danbury, CT.

I wanted to participate in person, but I am in a wheelchair, and my car is buried in snow. Brookside Rest Home serves 20 residents. I have been in business for 38 years and am now the only one left in the area. We had 5 homes in town when I started. As you are aware the rates paid to Residential Care Homes are substantially less than the cost of a nursing home. I am in Fairfield County and receive \$73.63 a day for 3 meals, assisting with bathing, taking them to Dr. appointments, shopping and 24 hour in house supervision. Residential Care Homes provide a setting that is more home based, not institutional and represent perhaps the most cost effective form of long-term care in the state.

I would like to share my concerns regarding the Governor's Budget, specifically the capping of Residential Care Home rates. The proposed changes to legislation leave owners like me in the dark with no clear vision of what future rates will be. We are being asked to continue to offer the wonderful care we provide with no guidelines governing payment. If we desire to increase costs by adding extra staff, renovating our facilities or giving our staff small raises, we would have to do so with the hope that our rates would be adjusted accordingly.

If providers are not reimbursed for actual expenses, than we are forced to cut costs elsewhere. For example, this has been a very cold winter. If this proposed bill is adopted, the increase in this season's heating costs and snow removal will not be reimbursed. I will then need to determine what costs must be cut to make ends meet. Owners like me strive to continue providing health insurance to our employees. I already had to cancel our dental plan and I can only insure the staff person and no more family or spouse. If the proposed bill is adopted, increases in premiums will be passed on to the employees or the insurance may be cancelled all together. My staff would like to get an increase in salary, something I haven't been able to do in 3 years, but because of insurance cost going up I cannot do it. We pay above min wage and we start at \$11.50 but we live in Fairfield County, which is very expensive. My staff is the back bone of my business with them working for me up to 30 years. The only reason I have not closed is due to no mortgage.

The care and love we offer our residents is unsurpassed. I would hate to see another RCH close due to cuts. I am the contact person for the RCH's. I hear a lot of grumbling about people just not able to make it and think of closing. It has been on my mind for the past several years. The residents keep me going.

Sincerely  
Sonja Zandri  
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