



*February 14, 2014*

*Written Testimony of Robert Burke, LCSW, Vice President of Psychosocial Services, iCare Management, Manchester, CT, Concerning the Governor's Midterm Budget Adjustment proposal for FY 2015*

Good Evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Robert Burke. I am a Connecticut Licensed Clinical Social Worker and the Vice President of Psychosocial Services for iCare Management in Manchester, Connecticut. We, at iCare, manage 10 Connecticut skilled nursing facilities that include almost 1,400 licensed beds, presently caring for approximately 1,270 Connecticut citizens with approximately 1,700 employees. At this time approximately 93% of the individuals receiving skilled nursing care and services in iCare managed facilities are covered by Connecticut Medicaid.

We at iCare are proud of the diverse and specialized services that are provided by the staff of those facilities we manage. Our managed facilities provide a broader range of on-site holistic care for Connecticut citizens with chronic and sub acute co-morbidities than any of their Connecticut contemporaries. For the sake of time and in lieu of quoting extensive program details and data, if you doubt that last statement, I invite you to enquire about iCare-managed facilities and their specialties with the discharge planning or emergency department staff of your local hospital(s). That being said, and with an understanding that our facilities provide greatly needed services to a great number of Connecticut citizens in need, I implore you to consider the consequences of balancing a budget by withholding the fiscal resources necessary to sustain life, health and well-being for so many in nursing facilities such as ours.

Connecticut's long term care providers have been continuously revising, re-tooling, and re-inventing their care and service delivery systems in order to sustain a state and federally mandated and highly regulated quality of skilled nursing care despite continuously diminishing Connecticut Medicaid reimbursement dollars. Many providers have collapsed and closed due to these increasing demands, creating displacement of frail, disabled and vulnerable persons as well as extensive job loss. With a current 91% nursing facility occupancy rate and an expected exponential growth in Connecticut's aging population, subsequent provider closures would not

likely be in the best healthcare interests of Connecticut. Moving forward on Medicaid cuts will greatly increase risk of diminishing availability and quality of needed nursing facility healthcare. Choose whichever analogy works...the back is about to break, the dam is about to burst, don't throw out the baby with the bath water (?)...the bottom line is that we need your help. Help us to elevate and sustain healthcare to so many citizens rather than continuously jeopardizing it by pulling back or withholding a healthcare industry's lifeblood. Please restore previously executed Medicaid cuts to our skilled nursing facilities, resolve the currently seen extensive delays in the Medicaid eligibility process, and vote against any cuts from Medicaid funding of nursing facilities.

I have the utmost respect for the duties, responsibilities and demands that come with your offices as state legislators and I appreciate your attention and consideration if this statement has secured either or those, and am very grateful if it be both.