

TESTIMONY OF Kal Patel, Meadowbrook Manor, Administrator
IN OPPOSITION TO
Section 11 of HB 5052- AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS.

Human Services Committee Public Hearing, February 20, 2014

Senator Slossberg, Representative Abercrombie and members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Kal Patel. I am a board member of the CT Association of Residential Care Home and Administrator of Meadowbrook and Essex Village Manor in Essex Ct. I am here to testify **in opposition to Section 11 of House Bill 5052- An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations for Human Services Programs.**

Section 11 of House Bill 5052 would eliminate most of Ct General Statutes § 17b-340(h)(1) which is the residential care home rate statute. This statute includes critical language for residential care homes.

The proposed bill would **remove the following language:**

1. The \$3.10 minimum fair rent granted beginning with the fiscal year ending 6/30/97.
2. The lower (85%) utilization threshold for homes with fewer than 25 beds granted beginning with the fiscal year ending 6/30/97.
3. The additional salary allowance specifically added for RCH administrators for the fiscal year ending 6/30/02.
4. The additional salary allowance specifically added for related parties employed by an RCH granted for the fiscal year ending 6/30/99.
5. The additional eight hours of weekly overtime allowed for related parties employed by an RCH granted for the fiscal year ending 6/30/01.

The removal of these protections would jeopardize the ability for many homes to continue to operate and burden an already underpaid industry where owners are forced to spend money using a credit card or taking out loans for operating costs. We provide residence with 24 hour staff supervision, medication supervision, housekeeping, breakfast, lunch, dinner, recreation, and physical plant maintenance for approximately \$2750 per month. The sad truth here is that the amount it costs to care for our residents (utilities, employment cost, food, property upkeep and insurance) have gone up over the past few years but my rate has remained almost the same \$2750. The vast majority of our employees who make a modest working wage had to take a pay freeze. I've had to increase their health insurance contributions and drop family coverage. Additionally we've had to delay improvements and maintenance to the facility.

The CT Association of Residential Care Homes includes over sixty of the states approximately one hundred homes. About sixty percent of our residents have behavioral health or mental health diagnoses and the remaining percentage are elderly. We serve 56 residents of which vast majority have mental health issues. We are the first "line of defense" to help prevent some of these residents from unnecessary visits to emergency care at much greater cost, we are ensuring there taking their medications and going to their doctors. We have unfortunately seen recently how lack of supervision and pro-active care for some mentally challenged people can cause national tragedies.

After years of being flat funded or seeing small increases residential care homes face a critical breaking point. A vast majority of our cost are critical. Food, electricity, heating oil and insurance cost can't be negotiated lower and must be provided. Over the past few years these cost have risen exponentially yet our rates have been frozen and continued to be threatened through proposals like Section 11 of House Bill 5052.

Last year, there was a small increase in rates to some residential care homes. Because it was only a partial increase only some homes received the increase. These included many homes that had previously spent significant amounts of money on repairs and other expenses. This small increase enabled reimbursement for some of these costs. The Governor's budget bill could lead to a decrease in funding for these homes and others who have not been able to make such investments.

We ask that you please uncap residential care home rates and not move forward with the proposed language in Section 11 of House Bill 5052. Many homes are already at a breaking point. Increased costs in gas, insurance and food expenses accompanied by capped rates have made operating homes very difficult. Without these homes serving this vulnerable population, the state would be spending significantly more dollars providing care for these individuals. Residential care homes are critical to many of these people who often live in the home for 20 years or more.

I thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony

Respectfully Submitted
Kal Patel
EssexVillage Manor / Meadowbrook Manor