

February 20, 2014

Written testimony of Blair Quasnitschka, Administrator, Salmon Brook Center (Glastonbury, CT) Concerning:

S.B. No. 104 (RAISED) AN ACT PROVIDING FINANCIAL RELIEF TO NURSING HOMES FOR UNCOMPENSATED CARE.

Good afternoon Senator Slossberg, Representative Abercrombie and to the members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Blair Quasnitschka. I am the Administrator of Salmon Brook Center, a skilled nursing facility in Glastonbury, Connecticut. Salmon Brook Center is a longstanding provider of nursing care in the community of Glastonbury. The facility is a AHCA Quality Award Winner. We serve 130 dual licensed Medicare and Medicaid beds and employ 175 staff members. I am here this afternoon to ask the Human Services Committee to ask for your support for S.B. No. 104 (RAISED) AN ACT PROVIDING FINANCIAL RELIEF TO NURSING HOMES FOR UNCOMPENSATED CARE. This bill is being advanced by the Connecticut Association of Health Care Facilities (CAHCF), of which our organization is a member.

This legislation is badly needed to address the persistent and worsening problem of excessive delays in the long term care Medicaid eligibility determination process at the Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS) for skilled nursing facilities. Connecticut skilled nursing facilities and their residents are harmed by excessive delays in the eligibility determination process. As Medicaid applicants residing in nursing facilities await final disposition of their requests for state help, Connecticut nursing homes are simultaneously providing uncompensated care for periods of time often exceeding federal standard of promptness rules. This bill addresses this situation by requiring advanced payments for the money owed by the state. The bill also addresses the fundamental unfairness of requiring nursing facilities to pay provider taxes, penalties, interest and fees for care provided to Medicaid applicants and recipients, when no payment is being received from Medicaid for providing care due to excessive delays.

Our nursing home is harmed by these excessive Medicaid eligibility and payment delays. When I took over at Salmon Brook roughly a year and a half ago, we had only 3 pending cases in house – that number is now up to 9 in house cases, with an average between 6-7 months each application is taking to get granted. With these applications sitting in “pending” status, facilities are forced to provide “free care” until the application is granted. Obviously, our bills are not put on hold for this period – we still have to meet payroll, pay for supplies, our utilities – we need a reimbursement system that pays us for the quality care we provide in a timely manner to ease the financial burden we face

because of the lag time presented in the Medicaid application granting process. This facility is currently sitting on over \$400,000 in monies owed to us through the Medicaid system.

CAHCF applauds and encourages the DSS efforts to modernize its eligibility systems and for their commitment to hire badly-needed eligibility staff to address delays across the entire public and medical assistance spectrum. However, the state's initiatives are not yet providing relief, and we are concerned the situation may continue to worsen. Please pass this bill. Our nursing home needs your help.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.