

February 27, 2015

Written testimony of James Dahl, Executive Director, Village Green of Bristol, Concerning the Governor's Recommended FY 2016 and FY 2017 Proposed Budget

Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker and to the members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is James Dahl. I am the Executive Director at the Village Green of Bristol in Bristol, Connecticut. Our center is a longstanding provider of nursing care service in Bristol, Forestville and the surrounding communities. We are licensed for 120 beds, including 16 beds designated for care of residents requiring ventilator services and other specialized respiratory care services. We are the recipient of the American Health Care Associations Bronze Quality Award, a participant in the national Advancing Excellence in Nursing Home campaign, as well as other state and federal initiatives to promote quality care in the skilled nursing setting.

I want to begin by letting you know how proud I am to support my colleagues and the Connecticut Association of Health Care Facilities. I regret that I am unable to attend in person today but I echo the sentiments of those in attendance. I speak on behalf of devoted caregivers - RNs, LPNs, CNAs, housekeepers, recreation staff and all those who want what I want----to deliver the highest quality care experience to anyone who comes to the Village Green of Bristol. Each day these dedicated employees doing an amazing job, and I am so grateful to them, and proud of them, for everything they are doing.

The desire is there but the daily challenges are extraordinary. Delivering the care that everyone wants for their loved ones is getting harder and harder. The reason it's getting so hard is not really difficult to understand---there has been almost no help in the budget for the past 8 years. The reimbursement rate remains flat while almost all of our costs are going up. If the budget passes as is, it will be a decade of nearly flat funding for our nursing facility. The idea that our nursing facility could be cut this session because of our state's ongoing financial troubles is so devastating---even beyond my ability to understand how we could deliver the care we want to deliver. I am not sure how I could implement any cuts as the administrator or how I would tell my employees or residents that we need to cut even more than our flat funding has required over the years.

Here are some examples of what we've been up against while the rates have been stagnant:

- Ongoing increases in the cost of gas, electricity and other utilities needed to run our building and keep our residents safe
- Replacement of aging physical plant systems at well over \$150,000. This represents both planned and unplanned expense.
- Recognition of the valuable contributions of our employees and the challenges of providing meaningful wage increases in the face of declining reimbursements, challenges for all in the granting of Medicaid applications. Wage increases of 1% to 1.5% have been the norm and the only fiscally responsible way to ensure the long term viability of our center.
- Here at Village Green the needs of our residents are also increasing. The acuity of our residents is so much more complex as our population ages. While there are many success stories related to the Money Follows the Person program, the reality is that the needs of many individuals require skilled nursing care – those with advanced dementia and those whose chronic and acute medical needs make home care both unsafe and cost prohibitive. Village Green is one of two nursing homes in Connecticut offering ventilator care. We are taking steps to make those individuals as independent as we can within the building. This is one of many examples of our commitment to a quality experience for residents.
- We remain committed to Resident Centered care service models. Initiatives to reduce the use of antipsychotic medications, expand resident programs and services, reduction of hospital readmissions and other similar initiatives provide numerous benefits to our residents. We applaud and support these efforts. At the same time successful execution of these initiatives requires appropriate funding.

Please help us deliver the high quality care our residents need and deserve by providing us the resources needed to do so.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have. Please feel free to contact me at 860-589-2923.

Sincerely,



James Dahl, MPH, NHA

Executive Director

Village Green of Bristol