



SUPPORT HB-5816, An Act Concerning Audits by State Agencies

Sen. Cassano, Rep. Jutila and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee

I am Eileen Adams of the CT Homemaker and Companion Association. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony to address the issue of Department of Social Services, Office of Quality Assurance provider audits.

Fairness in audits is the issue that brought together several owner-operated and not-for-profit non-medical homemaker and companion agencies more than 12 years ago. We formed CTHCA and now have more than 50 member agencies. It also brought together in 2014 a coalition of care providers that met to identify measures to achieve fairness in the audit process. We agree with the proposals that are attached and that you have received from other provider associations.

What we in the provider community want from the state is **no extrapolation** without evidence that a provider has a sustained high level of error or where there is fraud. We should not be held to a **Zero Error Rate**, especially considering our mistakes are mostly clerical in nature and not for an overbilling when services were paid but not authorized. We ask for clear guidelines on what is an error, timeframe for the audits and sampling methodology, and an independent appeal, not an adjudicator appointed from within DSS.

In the CT Home Care Program for Elders, homemakers, companions and PCAs mostly perform recurring services. The care managers will assign blocks of time per day, per week, per month, depending upon the needs of the consumer. With agencies, most of them small Mom & Pop style businesses, processing hundreds to thousands to tens of thousands of time/activity sheets each week, it's easy to see how a checkmark of what duty was performed on a given day can be missed. And yet, although the time and date was billed according to the care plan and there are signatures of both consumer and caregiver confirming the service was performed, without a checkmark indicating the service description, it is an audit finding resulting in thousands of dollars to be paid back to the state. At the exit conference, the agency may bring in evidence to support that services were performed according to the care plan. However, at these meetings, auditors have said that although they agree from the timesheet that a caregiver was there, they cannot accept "after the fact" evidence. Missing checkmarks like this did not result in a financial consequence to the Medicaid program, yet became a financial penalty to an agency. We are referring to a service that was reimbursed \$14.52 per hour, when extrapolated to the whole 3-year universe of claims, becoming a fine costing thousands (for a small agency) to tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands of dollars.



Our industry's 1% increase in January, the first increase since 2007, amounted to 16 cents per hour. We are operating at thin to no profit margins. Many homemaker and companion agencies have opted to pay the fine rather than risk an attorney's retainer in order to try to negotiate down the recoupment amount. Getting the DSS audits to what they are meant to be – a way to detect fraud or legitimate overbillings – will help agencies continue to do what they do best, take care of the state's consumers in their homes, where they want to live.

Thank you,
Eileen H. Adams
185 Ivy Drive
Bristol, CT 06010
eileenhadams@comcast.net
CT Homemaker & Companion Association