



### TESTIMONY

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Before the Human Services Committee  
February 5, 2015

**SUPPORT: Proposed HB 5827, AN ACT CONCERNING MEDICAID FUNDED HOME  
HEALTH CARE**

Good Afternoon Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and honorable members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Jeanne Silverwatch. I am the Administrator and Area Director for Connecticut for Pediatric Services of America. I am also an RN with over 25 years of experience in pediatric acute care and pediatric home health care.

PSA Healthcare is a licensed home care agency and member of the Connecticut Association for Healthcare at Home. PSA has been a leading provider of pediatric homecare services for medically fragile children in Connecticut for over 20 years. Our focus is on providing professional, high quality continuous skilled nursing by highly trained skilled caregivers to this medically fragile pediatric population. Our services cover all eight counties in Connecticut. Approximately 85% of the pediatric populations we serve receive benefits from Medicaid or Medicaid waiver programs.

**I support proposed House Bill 5827: AN ACT CONCERNING MEDICAID FUNDED HOME HEALTH CARE**, specifically item 3) to address the increased need for pediatric home health services delivered by home health providers in the community.

The largest groups of patients that receive continuous skilled nursing care in the state of Connecticut are children who are medically fragile. The need for continuous skilled nursing care for these medically fragile patients has heightened in the wake of the increase

in advances of bio-medical engineering and technology. These advancements are preserving life where, previously certain disease states often meant the loss of life.

These children have complex medical diagnoses and many of whom require life sustaining equipment for survival. These children are discharged from Pediatric Intensive Care Units into their homes. Many of them require feeding tubes for nutrition, tracheostomy tubes to maintain a patent airway and ventilators to assist them to breathe. Their bedrooms in their homes are modeled like intensive care unit environments. They require 24 hour a day constant observation. Many of these families are extremely stressed with having a medically fragile child to care for and still need to perform activities of daily living such as work to provide for their families, care for other children they may have and perhaps get a few hours of sleep to sustain their efforts.

Without access to continuous skilled nursing care, it would be necessary for these patients to be transferred to an acute or chronic disease hospital or the patient might remain home unsafely without proper care. Transfer to a hospital setting would not be consistent with state and federal initiatives that promote home and community based supportive living for persons with medically complex needs. Additionally, the damaging effects of institutional care versus family based care include increased risk of infection. It is often that the infectious process is the most life threatening to children with complex needs.

While the need for more continuous skilled nursing for this population is increasing, the numbers of properly trained skilled care-givers are decreasing. The costs for providing these services are increasing directly related to complexity of the care of the child and the skill level of the caregiver that is required to care for their complex needs. The number of agencies that can afford to provide care to these clients decreases each day. These families need access to this care in everyday life and in emergency situations. PSA Healthcare works diligently to provide this highly skilled care to these medically fragile patients and their families. Whether it is providing training and education to the families and nurses or making sure that the families are properly prepared for emergency situations, PSA Healthcare provides the home health services that assure they have quality care and positive outcomes.

The best example of success is seen through the eyes of a five year old boy who was discharged from the hospital for the first time at 9 months of age. He has received 23 hours a day of continuous skilled nursing services from PSA and by his own primary care doctor's admission was not expected to survive past his first birthday. He is now attending kindergarten and off ventilator support, in large part because of the care he has been provided in the home with his family.

Thank you.