



"We Care and it Shows"
Specializing in Short Term Rehabilitation
& Subacute Care

February 27, 2015

Written testimony of Robert Fritz, Administrator, Sheriden Woods Health Care Center, 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 Robert Fritz. I am the Administrator of Sheriden Woods Health Care Center, in Bristol, Connecticut. Sheriden Woods is a longstanding provider of nursing care in the Bristol community and surrounding towns, with 146 skilled nursing and rehabilitation beds, and over 235 employees.

I want to begin by letting you know how proud I am to be a part of the dedicated group from Sheriden Woods Health Care Center that are responsible for the highest quality care to our residents. I'm the administrator, but all of the devoted caregivers at Sheriden Woods, from RNs, LPNs, CNAs, to dietary and housekeeping staff, all want what I want----that is to deliver the highest quality care experience to anyone who comes to Sheriden Woods. And these workers are doing an amazing job, and I am so grateful to them, and proud of them, for everything that they are doing.

But making the care great has so many challenges. Making the care what everyone wants for their loved ones is getting harder and harder. And the reason it's getting so hard isn't really difficult to understand---there has been almost no help in the budget for now going on 8 years. All of this, 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:

- The ever increasing costs and rising prices of food, utilities, criminal background checks, encryption software, and supplies to meet the needs of everyday living. In addition, the yearly increases associated with health insurance premiums for our employees.
- There are also the rising costs of medications and medications not being covered by Medicare Part D plans or Medicaid, forcing the facilities to cover these costs. Medication costs for Medicare Part A residents have increased as well and these medication costs are covered in our inclusive rates.
- Here at Sheriden Woods Health Care Center, the needs of our residents are also increasing. The acuity of our residents is so much more complex as our populations ages. There are more options for those with fewer care needs to be home and getting services there. Those individuals that are relatively healthy are going directly home from the hospital. But the residents that come to Sheriden Woods Health Care Center need to be with us. The needs are too complex for care at home. In the past month alone, we have provided peritoneal dialysis, TPN, IV therapy and lymphedema therapy to many of our clinically complex patients.

We can't continue on the path where no help is provided, without strapping our employees and jeopardizing quality.

Please help us deliver the high quality care we want to deliver. Please give us the resources we need to do it.

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