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February 27, 2015

Written testimony of Erica Roman, Administrator, Countryside Manor of Bristol 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 Erica Roman and I am the administrator at Countryside Manor of Bristol located in Bristol, Connecticut. We are a 90 bed skilled nursing facility, which employs 180 hardworking individuals. Countryside Manor has been recognized as a 5 star facility by CMS. We have also been recognized for reducing hospitalizations, reducing antipsychotics and increasing staff stability.

Thank you very much for taking your valuable time out this evening to listen to my testimony. I am very proud to sit before you to deliver a message that not only greatly affects our residents, but the hard working and dedicated staff of the nursing home industry.

Much of the testimony you hear this evening will likely sound similar. This is due to the fact that most nursing homes are facing the same problems. The cost of providing care continues to rise, while the reimbursement rates remain stagnant. The message I will say tonight is simple…our nursing homes need your help desperately. The vulnerable population of elderly and disabled, who need skilled nursing care today and in the future, will be the ones to suffer if there is a cut in the Medicaid rate. The hard working and dedicated staff who provide that care will be negatively impacted as well.

Without an increase since 2007, nursing homes are left to struggle to provide the caliber of care that our residents deserve. If the unthinkable happens, and the budget passes as is, it will be a decade of nearly flat funding for our nursing facility. As an Administrator, I would have to make extremely difficult choices in our nursing home that would decrease the quality of life for our residents. I would be forced to make decisions such as choosing a lesser quality of food, canceling a recreation program, or even worse, reducing staff.

1660 Stafford Avenue, Bristol, Connecticut 06010
860-583-8483 • fax: 860-585-7913 • athenahealthcare.com/countryside

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

- With the increase in home care and the strong focus on reducing hospitalizations, nursing home residents have required a higher level of care. Skilled nursing facilities are providing high skilled nursing care to residents in house as opposed to sending out to a hospital. These higher acuity residents cost more to take care of and without a Medicaid rate increase, the cost is incurred by the facility.
- Similar to the rest of America, the cost of living in a nursing home continues to increase. In addition to costly items like gas and electricity, the price of healthcare supplies and equipment has been on the rise. All of this puts a strain on the nursing home trying to provide the high quality of care our residents deserve.
- Nursing homes have become one of the highest regulated fields; however we have limited funding to remain in compliance with these regulations. A cut in the Medicaid rate will make it even more difficult to provide the amazing care that our elderly and disabled Connecticut residents should be entitled to.

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.

Respectfully Submitted,

Erica Roman, Administrator

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