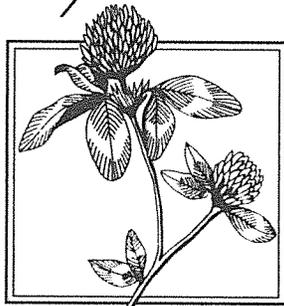


# Litchfield Woods



HEALTH CARE CENTER

*February 27, 2015*

## ***Written testimony of Denise Quarles, Administrator, Litchfield 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 Denise Quarles. I am Administrator at Litchfield Woods Health Care Center in Torrington, Connecticut. Litchfield Woods is a longstanding provider of nursing care in Litchfield County. There are 160 beds and 285 employees. The facility has recently been recognized by the American Health Care Association for safety and reducing hospitalizations.

I want to begin by letting you know how proud I am to be here to represent Litchfield Woods. I have been the Administrator since 2006. I consider myself a resident advocate and feel it is my duty and obligation to sit here today. Professionals, caregivers, and service workers are doing an amazing job at Litchfield Woods but we need your help. Our nursing facility needs a cost of living adjustment to continue delivering the quality care as we are faced with higher costs and new requirements.

Delivering high quality care has 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 since 2007, while almost all of our costs are going up. Expenses at Litchfield Woods have gone up over a half of million dollars in the last year alone....Nursing labor costs are up \$44, 207, insurance and employee benefit costs increased almost \$200,000, ancillary costs over \$40,000, nursing supplies and supplements over \$14,000, food and dietary costs over \$4,000, pharmacy costs over \$6,000, and utilities over \$50,000. 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. We are already operating on extremely tight budgets and spend multiple hours a week focusing on staffing our facility where we still provide the needed care to our residents. As labor is 70% of our budget, it is not even feasible to think that

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staffing can be cut in any department. Even on a day that is fully staffed, it is still difficult to provide the needed care and services to our deserving residents.

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

- Expenses have significantly increased as previously stated.
- As there is an increase in available services to Elders in the community, programs like Money Follows the Person and Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders, have impacted the type of residents admitted to our facility. We applaud these community programs that offer long-term care options that maximize autonomy, dignity, and choice. However, skilled nursing homes are then admitting patients with a higher acuity, costing more for the nursing home whom is committed to providing quality care and services.
- There are many costs that the nursing homes pay which are not always billable to Medicaid...examples include some mediations and chemotherapy, Physical, Occupational, and Speech therapy services, and dental care. Litchfield Woods pays over \$1500 a month for dental services for our residents. All of these items are crucial to our resident's health and well-being. Litchfield Woods often admits straight Medicaid patients requiring rehabilitation services in which we can not bill for therapy services. For one recent patient, we had \$7500 for therapy services which we could not bill for over a three month period. Litchfield Woods provides the needed care and services despite the payer source.
- Finding qualified, compassionate staff can be challenging as well as expensive. It is important to screen all employees to ensure the very best are hired to care for our vulnerable elderly population.
- Residents are living longer and requiring more care. The average age of a resident at Litchfield Woods Health Care Center is 87. We have 9 residents over 100 years of age.

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.



Denise Quarles

Administrator