

TRINITY HILL CARE CENTER

February 27, 2015

Written testimony of George Kingston, Administrator, Trinity Hill 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 George Kingston and I am the Administrator of Trinity Hill Care Center. We are a 144 bed skilled nursing facility located in Hartford, CT. Trinity Hill is a recipient of the American Health Care Associations Quality award and currently enjoys a four star quality award rating from CMS, the Federal agency that is responsible for overseeing the delivery of care in nursing homes.

The nursing home population demographics are quite similar for both the state of Connecticut and the nation as a whole. 65% of patients are female, with 68% of the population over the age of 75. Trinity Hill's population is unique in that 69% are male with 75% of the residents under the age of 65. At 54 years of age, I am older than 43% of the residents I serve. Nearly 100% of Trinity Hill's residents are insured through the Medicaid Program.

Not long ago, a typical new patient for Trinity Hill would be a 40 year old with a heart valve infection resulting from IV illicit drug use. Following six weeks of antibiotics the patient would be discharged infection free only to return to the hospital ER four months later with a similar ailment due to illicit behaviors. This cycle of recidivism repeated itself countless times. Both the Hospital and the nursing home were curing the infection, but not the underlying disease. Trinity created a program called iRecovery which provides intensive group and individual substance abuse counseling while receiving medical care in the nursing home. For the first time these disenfranchised individuals are being adequately armed in the daily battle with their addictions.

Despite the program's success in number of lives reclaimed and thousands of dollars saved in eliminating the never ending cycle of substance abuse related re-hospitalization, our program is threatened by the current reimbursement climate. Nursing home funding has been essentially flat for the past eight years despite costs rising beyond our control. Utility costs have grown over \$30,000 per year; The Affordable Care Act has increased health insurance costs \$35,000 per year. Failure by the State to repay its Federal Unemployment Loans timely has increased the tax rate costing Trinity an additional \$17,000 in annual Unemployment Insurance costs.

The majority of my staff are members of the New England Health Care Employees Union District 1199/SEIU. My contract and the contracts of fifty one other nursing homes expire this coming March 15th. In the absence of Medicaid rate relief, I don't see how 51 state-wide contracts will be settled without the potential of job actions. Additional Medicaid monies are necessary for me to fairly pay my employees for the quality care they provide and to help pay for the level of care and services my patients deserve.

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