



February 11, 2016

Written testimony of Kathleen A. Pajor, LNHA, FACHCA, HHFMA, President of Beechwood Post-Acute, Transitional and Long Term Care, Concerning the Governor's Recommended FY 2016 and FY 2017 Proposed Budget

Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker and the members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Kathleen A. Pajor. I am the President of Beechwood Post-Acute, Transitional and Long Term Care, located in New London, CT.

Beechwood, an independent skilled facility, has been a longstanding provider of nursing care in the community since 1955. Beechwood received the AHCA Quality Tier Award in 2014 & 2015. It has been a CMS 5 STAR facility since 2011, with 5 STARS in quality. Beechwood has also been recognized as a Top Nursing Home since 2010 by U.S. News and World Report and an Award winner for Quality First by AHCA since 2007. Since 2010, the past and current Administrators have received National awards for leadership from the American Health Care Association and the American College of Health Care Executives.

Beechwood's hospital re-admission rate for 2015 was 10.5%. The State average re-admission rate is 19% and its anti-psychotic use in 2015 was approximately 10% well below the State and National averages.

I am very proud of Beechwood's accomplishments and the accomplishments of the skilled nursing facilities that have stepped to improve the quality of life for the population we serve. The skilled nursing community who stand before you want to deliver the highest quality care experience to anyone who comes to our communities. And these employees are doing an amazing job, and I am so grateful to them, and proud of them, for everything they are doing. The challenge to continue delivering this level of care has become more difficult for all the skilled facilities.

While the budget proposal doesn't have a specific nursing home reduction it will be a decade of nearly flat funding for Beechwood if monies are not designated for the population we serve. The idea that our nursing facility could be cut this session because of the State's ongoing financial troubles is difficult to comprehend.

The employees of Beechwood are grateful for money included in last year's budget for our nursing home workers. Acknowledging the critically important work being done every day with wage and benefit increases for our caregivers is so important to our mission to deliver high quality care.

But we are under so many additional pressures beyond the important need to pay our workers a fair wage for the great jobs they are doing. Here are some examples:

- Skilled nursing facilities are in competition with the hospitals to recruit and keep expert clinicians and care givers. Every health care entity is in competition for the same pool of workers.
- Food costs have increased 11% over last year; electricity has increase 15% of the past two years and city, state and federal taxes have increased over the last three years due to an increase in working people moving out of state and the ACA initiatives.
- The level of care Beechwood has to deliver to its patients and residents have become more costly, more demanding on staff time and complex due to the aging population, multiple co-morbidities affecting all age groups and the growing population of disease related issues like environmental cancers, drug, alcohol and mental illness.

On behalf of everyone at Beechwood, thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have. I can be reached at 860-442-4363 or 203-605-8239 at any time.