



February 11, 2016

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. We continue to work very hard at Sheriden Woods to meet the needs of our ever changing resident population; to work closely with Bristol Hospital and other area hospitals to reduce hospitalization rates; to work with ACO's to control health care costs and maintain continuity of care; and to provide the homelike atmosphere for our long term residents who call Sheriden Woods their home.

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 10 years. While the budget proposal doesn't now have a specific nursing home reduction, if passed 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. It is really beyond my ability to understand how we could deliver the care we want to deliver if we were cut.

I do want to say how grateful and appreciative we are that money was included in last year's budget for our nursing home workers. Acknowledging the critically important work being done every day with the 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 just a few examples:

- 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 population 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. We are providing peritoneal dialysis, TPN, IV therapy and lymphedema therapy to many of our clinically complex patients.

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

On behalf of everyone at Sheriden Woods, thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.