



February 11, 2016

Written testimony of Thomas Walkuski, Administrator, Abbott Terrace Health 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 Thomas Walkuski. I am the Administrator at Abbott Terrace Health Center in Waterbury, Connecticut. Abbott Terrace is a longstanding provider of nursing care in the community with 205 SNF beds and over 325 employees employed within the facility.

I want to begin by letting you know how proud I am to be here with some of the key people from Abbott Terrace Health Center. I'm the Administrator, but these devoted caregivers, from all departments want what I want----that is to deliver the highest quality care experience to anyone who comes to Abbott Terrace. These workers are doing an amazing job, and I am so grateful to them, and proud of them, for everything they are doing like reducing hospital readmissions, providing superior customer service and giving all residents a home like experience.

But making the care great has so many challenges. Making the care what everyone wants for their loved ones is getting harder and harder. 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 we are that money was included in last year's budget for our nursing home workers. Acknowledging the critically important job 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:

- Increased cost in food and supply costs.
- Providing new ways to treat patients (bladder scanners, wound care products, ACP therapy treatments).

Here at Abbott Terrace the needs of our residents are also increasing; the acuity of our residents is so much more complex as our population's ages. There are also more options for those with fewer care needs to be home and getting services there. The residents that come to Abbott Terrace need to be with us. Their needs are too complex for care at home.

Please help us deliver the high quality care we want to deliver.

On behalf of everyone at Abbott Terrace thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Walkuski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial 'T'.

Thomas Walkuski
Administrator