

Testimony of Rhonda Boisvert

Connecticut Association of Residential Care Homes

S.B. No 17 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET  
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN SERVICES

February 18, 2016 Human Services Public Hearing

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and Members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Rhonda Boisvert and I am Past President of the Connecticut Association of Residential Care Homes and the owner of Pleasant View Manor in Watertown, Ct. I am here today to testify in opposition to section 22 of Senate Bill 17 which once **again freezes residential care home rates.**

The Connecticut Association of Residential Care Homes includes the majority of the estimated one hundred homes in the state. Residential care homes have a total capacity of approximately 2,750 licensed beds that provide services to Aid to the Aged, Blind and Disabled eligible residents. The average rate is approximately \$93.00 per day. Residential care homes are not medical facilities nor do we provide medical care. We do however, serve an important function in providing housing to some of the most vulnerable citizens in Connecticut.

We serve about 3,000 residents with about a 95% census level of which about 94% are state funded beds-limiting our ability to cross shift. An estimated 75% of our residents have behavioral health or mental health diagnoses with the remainder being elderly residents. Without residential care homes the overwhelming majority of our residents would be served in a more costly environment-nursing homes, hospitals or institutional settings.

Since 2010 our rates have been frozen meaning new costs associated with the RCH have often not been reimbursed. This has come at the cost of improvements to residential care homes, employee wages and benefits being stagnant or cut, and recreation expenditures being sacrificed. In fact in some cases in order to just meet operating costs some homes have had to take out personal loans or put expenses on personal credit cards. This is unacceptable.

I would like to take this time to give you my personal experience as owner of Pleasant View Manor.

1. Three years ago we took out a personal loan to meet payroll and operation costs. We have to keep a line of credit open in order to operate our facility.
2. As owners we must wait until the end of the month to cash our pay checks, hoping that we can cover them.
3. Last year, my accountant suggested that we sell our home due to the financial hardship that we continually face. This year he said that we are providing charity for the state.
4. We provided 13 months of free care to a resident in the amount of \$20,000 due to a conservator not completing paperwork in a timely fashion. DSS said they couldn't reimburse us.

The lack of certainty prevents homes from increasing wages when there is a history of frozen rates and thus an inability to build wage increases into the RCH rate.

Our industry cannot continue to progress without the full support of the state.

Thank You for your time and consideration.