



February 11, 2016

Written testimony of Helen Byron, Administrator, St. Camillus Center Concerning the Governor's Recommended FY 2016 and FY 2017 Proposed Budget

Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker and Members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Helen Byron. I am the Administrator at St. Camillus Center in Stamford, Connecticut. St. Camillus Center is a longstanding provider of nursing care in the Stamford community. We have 124 resident beds and we employ 140 people. The American Health Care Association awarded us a Bronze Award in October of 2014. We care for people at all stages of life. We provide rehabilitation for patients returning home. We also provide long term care including palliative care, for those in need of more care and unable to return home.

I am not only representing St. Camillus Center, but Genesis skilled nursing facilities in Colchester, Danbury, Glastonbury, Groton, Hamden, Madison, Meriden, Naugatuck, Simsbury, Trumbull, Vernon, Wallingford, West Hartford, Windsor and Woodbridge. Together we represent 20 nursing facilities with 3,977 operating beds and approximately 3,200 employees.

I want to begin by letting you know how proud I am to be here because we want to deliver the highest quality care experience to anyone who comes to St. Camillus or any of our Genesis Centers. Our workers are doing an amazing job, and I am so grateful to them, and so proud of them, for everything that they do. We are able to provide rehab services and send people home every week, healthier and feeling much better than when they came to us upon admission.

But making the care great has many challenges. Making the care what everyone wants for their loved one is getting more difficult. And the reason it's getting more difficult isn't really hard to understand---there has been almost no help in the budget NOW going on 10 YEARS. While the budget proposal doesn't have a specific nursing home reduction, if passed as it is, it will be a decade of nearly flat funding for our nursing facilities. The idea that our nursing facilities could be cut this session because of our state's ongoing financial troubles is devastating. It is really beyond our ability to understand how we could deliver the care we want to deliver, our expected to deliver by our consumers if our budget continues to get reduced.

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 important work they do every day with wage and benefit increases is so important and helps us fulfill our mission to deliver high quality care.

Please know that 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:

- The acuity of our residents is so much higher and more complex than it used to be. The residents that come to St. Camillus and our other Centers really need to be here. Patients are coming from the hospitals earlier, with more co-morbidities.
- They can not be cared for at home. They come to us weak, and in need of strengthening so they can successfully return home or not be readmitted to the hospital.
- OR, they need things like wound vacs, dialysis, trach care, central lines, TPN or hospice on top of daily nursing care. These are people who cannot feed themselves, toilet themselves, transfer themselves or do what you and I do for ourselves every day. They need us to care for them and their needs are increasing.
- Patients who come to us are vulnerable and in need of round the clock skilled nursing care.
- These are the members of our community who need our assistance the most.

- Another pressure is financial in nature. We are expected to provide care and services for patients while the costs continue to increase and reimbursement remains unchanged.
- All the costs around us continue to increase! Food costs, medication costs, utilities and the basics to provide care are ever increasing and we are expected to do MORE with LESS!!

Please help us to continue delivering the high quality care we want to deliver!

On behalf of ALL THE RESIDENTS and ALL THE EMPLOYEES at St. Camillus and our other Genesis Centers, I thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.