

TRINITY HILL CARE CENTER

February 11, 2016

Written testimony of George Kingston, Administrator, Trinity Hill 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 George Kingston and I am the Administrator of Trinity Hill Care Center. We are a 144 bed skilled nursing facility located in Hartford, CT. Trinity Hill is a recipient of the American Health Care Associations Quality award and currently enjoys a four star quality award rating from CMS, the Federal agency that is responsible for overseeing the delivery of care in nursing homes.

You have and will continue to hear this evening from my industry colleagues regarding the ten years of flat funding of nursing homes while having to absorb costs beyond our control. My own building has had to endure \$27,000 in increased Federal Unemployment Tax expenses, and a \$35,000 increase in health insurance costs brought on by the Affordable Care Act. These are all true and worrisome concerns. The thought that nursing home funding could be cut this session due to the state's ongoing financial troubles is troubling.

I would like to spend a few minutes on what makes Trinity Hill so unique, and how any reduction would hurt not only our residents and staff, but have impacts across the state.

Not long ago, a typical new patient for Trinity Hill would be a 40 year old with a heart valve infection resulting from IV illicit drug use. After five days in the hospital, some spent in the ICU, the patient would come to us for six week to eight weeks of IV antibiotic therapy. Once the course of antibiotics was completed, the patient would be discharged infection free only to return to the hospital ER four months later with a similar ailment due to illicit behaviors. This cycle of recidivism repeated itself countless times. Both the Hospital and the nursing home were curing the infection, but not the underlying disease. In August 2014, Trinity created a program called *iRecovery* which provides intensive group and individual substance abuse counseling while receiving medical care in the nursing home. The program has been a success in helping to reclaim lives while saving the Medicaid system tens of thousands of dollars in recurring emergency room visits, hospital and nursing home stays. In the eighteen months prior to the introduction of the program, fourteen patients were admitted more than once to my facility due to substance abuse issues. In the same timespan following the introduction of the program, only two returned. Not

only are residents of Hartford benefitting from the program but across the state. Traditionally, the nursing home business is a neighborhood one. In 2015 31% of my admissions came from outside my geographic area. Residents of New London, Willimantic, Norwich, Bridgeport, and Bristol have all benefited from our *iRecovery* service.

With the development of the program we have seen increased costs, both in non-labor and labor. Given the complexity of this population, Social Workers and other allied personnel were added to the payroll. The overwhelming majority of these patients are Medicaid, so these incremental costs have been absorbed into our current reimbursement. While the current proposal does not call for a nursing home reduction, any reduction would seriously impact our ability to provide this much needed service. The elimination of this program would result in more lives lost and the escalation of emergency room and inpatient hospital Medicaid expenses across the state.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.