March 5, 2019

Written testimony of Curtis Rodowicz, Administrator/Co-Owner, Colonial Health and Rehab Center of Plainfield, LLC Concerning the Governor’s Recommended FY 2020 and FY 2021 Proposed Budget

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and to the members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Curtis Rodowicz. I am the Administrator and Co-Owner of Colonial Health and Rehab Center of Plainfield, LLC located in Plainfield, Connecticut. Colonial Health and Rehab has been providing nursing home care in our community since 1983. We are a 90-bed nursing home, and we have 115 employees working at our facility.

I want to begin by letting you know how proud I am of the employees of my center and all the other nursing facilities in Connecticut. I am the Administrator, but the devoted caregivers of my facility all want what I want—that is to deliver the highest quality care experience to anyone who comes to our facility. These workers are doing an amazing job, and I am so grateful to them, and proud of them, for everything they are doing. Our facility is an example of success against all odds. Our center, under previous ownership operated for many years and fell victim to unfortunate bankruptcy. I can not begin to tell you the turmoil a bankruptcy has for the residents, families, and staff of any facility. The uncertainty of tomorrow for the staff, the inability of residents to comprehend that they may no longer have a place to call home, and the families who become anxious for their loved one’s future are only a few. As our vision of hope of a future became a reality confidence of staff was built and care improved. Our residents and families have come to know us as family. Our facility slogan is “Family First”.

Since my business partner and I took over the facility on December 29, 2012 we have been faced with clinical, fiscal, quality and satisfaction challenges. We charted a path to success increasing occupancy to over 95% on average, achieved a CMS five star ranking, and an AHCA Bronze Quality Award. We are proud to participate as a community partner as a “Preferred Provider” with Hartford Healthcare’s Network. All things that
were not attainable without the commitment of the staff, leadership and vision of our management, and the care and support of our residents and families.

I am especially proud of the work our nursing home has done during a long period where Connecticut hasn’t made nursing home funding a priority. A recent OP-ED published in the CT News Junkie dated February 28, 2019 by Matthew V. Barrett voices the truth about care in Connecticut nursing homes. Do not be deceived by the isolated care concerns that are sensationalized as the everyday treatment in nursing homes. More often than not residents that discharge to home or remain permanently in a nursing facility are satisfied and willing to recommend services to others. Our picture has been painted by the news to all Connecticut residents and taxpayers as a drain on the Medicaid system, with inadequate and/or incompetent staffing. This can not be farther from the truth. Our nurses have grown leaps and bounds, clinical capabilities have drastically enhanced, mostly because the population entering a nursing facility requires this level of assistance.

All of our success has not been easily attained and is now at a point of a downward spiral, even for a visionary like me. You may ask, what has changed? The harsh reality is that any visionary that attempts to operate a facility in Connecticut is now required to wear a blindfold. Our ability to create quality and sustainable outcomes for our residents and upgrade our homes has been and is slated to deteriorate. We are forced to follow mountainous regulations with the lack of basic inflationary funding. I fear that our nursing home is now at a point where we can’t go another year without Connecticut policy makers recognizing that substantial Medicaid help is overdue to assure the quality care we all want to provide and our residents have come to expect.

Our Elected Leaders need to hear loud and clear that delivering the care everyone wants for their loved ones is getting harder and harder to provide. And the reason isn’t really hard to understand---there has been almost no additional Medicaid help in the state budget for now over twelve (12) years. Elected leaders need to hear that the nursing home population is older and sicker than it was twenty years ago. We see so much more dementia and behavioral disorders than ever before. Today’s nursing home residents also have substance use disorders on top of the skilled nursing care that today’s nursing home residents need.
It is really beyond my ability to understand how our nursing home can compete to retain or recruit staff to serve a more complex population with unemployment so low without more Medicaid help. The minimum wage increases proposed by 2023 will require substantial new Medicaid funding for nursing homes yet the budget indicates $0 increase for the next two years. It is hard for us to hit a home run, let alone a simple base hit, as we swing blindfolded like a grown adult swinging a bat at a piñata.

Please help us deliver the care we all want and please make long overdue nursing home funding a priority in this year’s budget.

On behalf of everyone at Colonial Health and Rehab Center of Plainfield, thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Curtis Rodowicz
Administrator/Co-Owner