Testimony of RANI BHOGAL  
Administrator and Owner of April Time RCH.

H.B. No. 7148 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNium ENDING  
JUNE THIRTIETH, 2021, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Human Services Public Hearing, March 5, 2019  
Concerning  
Department of Social Services Budget- Residential Care Home Funding

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle, Senator Flexer, Representative Abercrombie and Members of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Human Services, my name is Rani Bhogal and I am the owner and administrator at April Time residential care home and a member of the Connecticut Association of Residential Care Homes.

Residential care homes serve some of the most vulnerable residents in our State, including residents with mental and physical health diagnoses, substance abuse challenges, the elderly and those with social problems although we are not medical facilities. Over the last decade our rates have been consistently capped and even in years when we have seen increases, they have been limited to a percent or two, failing to keep up with inflation.

I took ownership of April Time 11 years ago. It was in a bad shape and required a lot of capitol, time and effort to bring it up to the DPH requirements and code. Our rate started low at $67 per diem but did increase to $70 per diem over the three years since there was no rate cap and the improvements and increased expenses were acknowledged. However, since then all rates have been frozen. Further improvements and increases in food prices, insurances, utilities, employee medical and dental cover, housekeeping, repairs etc. have had to be absorbed by the home without any increase in revenue. In our case these increases are in the range of $54,000 from that of 2010 when the rates were frozen. We have been reducing our expenses and are now unable to do that and I fear that we shall have no choice but to let the home deteriorate as before or even sell or close. If this happens it will be a real shame as the care and service, we provide is that of a very high standard and very cost effective to the State as compared to all other alternatives like incarnations, homelessness, substance addictions and abuse, repeat admissions to the hospitals, home visits by nurses to give medications, paying for food stamps and accommodation etc.

Taking care of these residents is demanding and is a real challenge too and sometimes we are literally ‘pulling out our hair’. It is not everyone’s cup of tea either. It requires a certain type of personality, a person who is caring, has patience and empathy. They must have background clearances (paid for by the homes now with no imbursement from the State) and go through med. training class. Their work load has also increased as they expected to take care of more frail residents which was not the case previously. We see a low morale amongst the employees. They have virtually had no increase in their pay. Indeed, we have lost two employees for precisely these reasons and it has been a challenge to replace these employees.

April Time has been on a cost cutting mission ever since our rates were frozen and it has got progressively harder and harder to carry on in status quo. We badly need funds for emergencies
(recently had to spend $4900 to repair a leaking boiler), repairs and maintenance, maintain adequate insurances, increased payroll to recruit competent staff etc. April Time needs to replace their old generator, require new flooring, new furniture, new interior paint and the list goes on. Without adequate funding are unable to any of these and our jobs are getting more and more difficult and stressful. I fear many homes will soon start closing if the rates are kept frozen. Almost all our income depends on the State funding. A decade of frozen rates is now taking its toll.

I, therefore, urge the committee to please acknowledge the impact of the budget on residential care homes, their employees, and some of Connecticut’s most vulnerable residents and unfreeze the cap on residential care home rates.

Ms. Rani Bhogal
April Time RCH,
91 Chestnut Street
Manchester. CT 06040.
Tel: 860-649-4519.