March 5, 2019

Written testimony of William E. White, President, Beechwood Post-Acute & Transitional Care 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 Bill White. I am the Administrator and President at Beechwood Post-Acute & Transitional Care in New London, Connecticut. Beechwood has been providing nursing home care in our community for over 63 years. We are a 60-bed nursing home and we have over 100 employees working at our facility.

I’m the administrator but the devoted caregivers I work with, RNs, LPNs, CNAs, etc... all want what I want----that is to deliver the highest quality care experience to anyone who comes to Beechwood. And these workers are doing an amazing job. I am so grateful to them and proud of them for everything they are doing. Beechwood is a 5-star nursing home, a US News & World Report national quality award winner and consistent winner of multiple “best of” awards – all on the shoulders of our fine staff.

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.

I am here this evening with a simple message from nursing home operators and on behalf of our residents and caregivers: Our nursing facility can’t take any more! Our commitment to our residents never waivers but we are not magicians. We cannot sustain continue zero percent increases without losing employees and jeopardizing quality, for us CARE comes first. We are very mindful and understanding of Connecticut’s fiscal challenges. But at a time when we need
our state government most to help us maintain the quality of care that we are known for and that is required of us, we have to speak up and voice our need for help.

I fear that our nursing home is now at a tipping point. That we are clearly 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.

You, your peers and our elected representatives 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 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 Alzheimer's disease than ever before. Today's nursing home residents also have greater behavioral health needs----mental health and substance use disorders are common 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 alone will require substantial new Medicaid funding for nursing homes and that doesn't touch the structural deficit we have been asked to absorb for more than a decade.

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 Beechwood, thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

William E. White
President