Dwayne D Spurley  
Operations Director, Essex Village Manor/Meadowbrook Manor

H.B. No. 7148 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNUIUM 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 Dwayne Spurley and I am the Operations Director at Essex Village Manor and Meadowbrook Manor and a member of the Connecticut Association of Residential Care Homes.

Residential care homes serve some of the most vulnerable residents in the state of CT including the homeless, residents with varying degrees of mental health diagnoses, dual diagnosis/substance abuse challenges, the elderly and those with health problems. Over the last decade our rates have been consistently capped and frozen even in years when we have seen increases, they have been limited to a percent or two, failing to keep up with inflation. Our current daily rates for Essex Village Manor are $87.87 and Meadowbrook Manor $95.31 respectively.

Essex Village Manor is a thirty-three bed residential care home and Meadowbrook Manor is twenty-five. We are viewed as non-skilled nursing facilities that employ approximately twenty-five total staff whom provide 24 hour seven day a week services included but not limited to facility administration (resident doctor appointment schedules, Med changes/MAR updates, etc.), building security, medication administration (controls and non-controls), wound care, breathing treatments, insulin monitoring, emergency healthcare (911 protocol), housekeeping (personal and common areas), individual laundry services, food preparation, food service and conflict resolution.

It is important to note that residential care homes also must work collaboratively with multiple community partners/agencies to preserve, facilitate and maintain a resident’s elected healthcare plan. Though we encourage self-reliance and independence it is critical to note that many of our residents require hourly prompting and daily direction from limited staffing resources. Currently state regulations require one staff per twenty-five residents. The current staffing regulations and monetary provisions granted by the state are simply not adequate relating to the vulnerable population we service. Residential care homes are imperative to the long-term care and management of this disparaged population in the state of Connecticut.

The lack of adequate state funding and increased employee wages continue to place hardships on the owners/operators of residential care homes, the occupying residents, facility staff and community resources who seek to assist. We have been consistently tasked to do more with less and we have done so not without fail. The administration is challenged daily with budget constraints and medication certification staffing shortages.
We now are facing an increased state minimum wage of $15.00 hourly. We agree our employees deserve to be paid a fair wage for the liable work they perform. We have been forced to internally increase our wage structure to compete within the existing workforce and to maintain a continuity of care our residents deserve. Our RCA staff execute critical tasks and assume liabilities most whom are employed in the private sector do not. Medication administration is critical to the daily functioning of many of our residents. This is a highly skilled area of our enterprise. Med Certified staff is state mandated. Garnering staff who possess the ability to perform this task is costly. Beginning with state fingerprint/background checks to the thirty-two-hour state mandated MAT course. Additionally, staff must be trained in-house prior to scheduling the final pass and pour completing the certification. Unfortunately, this process is often crippling to our operation when staffing and wages are at bare minimums. Should skill set not be an examining factor of importance when considering a state working wage?

Is the McDonalds food service cashier held to the same regulation and liability as a Residential Care Aide (RCA) who performs health saving measures? If a food service cashier is minimally worth $15.00 what is the worth of an individual tasked with the care of some of our most disadvantaged and vulnerable residents in the state?

We are not an agency that raises revenue making it virtually impossible to negotiate lower terms or costs for much needed services. Residential care homes are at the mercy of our daily rate. Essex Village Manor and Meadowbrook Manor have committed to servicing and managing this most vulnerable population of our state. We urge the committee to acknowledge the impact of the budget on residential care homes, their employees, and Connecticut’s most vulnerable residents and unfreeze the cap on residential care home rates.

Dwayne D Spurley
Operations Director

Essex Village Manor
860.767.1862

Meadowbrook Manor
860.767.2613