Testimony of Robert Page, LCSW, BCD
Executive Director Hannah Gray Home, Inc.
President of the Connecticut Association of Residential Care Homes

H.B. No. 7148 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIAUM 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 Robert Page and I am the executive director of the Hannah Gray Home, located in New Haven, CT and a member of the Connecticut Association of Residential Care Homes.

Residential care homes (RCH), over 90 located throughout the state, serve some of our most vulnerable citizens, including women and men with mental health diagnoses, substance use challenges, the elderly and those with chronic health concerns. By definition and state licensure regulations, we are not medical facilities, but we provide essential housing and other 24/7 daily living services for our residents. The most vital perhaps of all these services is independence and dignity. Over the last decade, however, the State Legislative process has consistently capped our rates—a decade long moratorium. Residential care home state funding, even when there has been some sort of state budgetary increase, RCH’s haven realized increases limited to one or two percent. On the other hand, inflationary increases over the past 10 years show a glaring disparity when looking at the operational cost of our state’s residential care homes and the vital services that CARCH provides for a growing Connecticut citizenry.

Residential Care Homes in Connecticut foster a core value of aging in place. Hannah Gray, an African American seamstress and laundress, is a stalwart example of aging in place. She remained during the mid-1800s in her home located in New Haven by providing food, clothing and shelter for indigenous African American women who would in turn provided support for her daily living needs. Today, CARCH and its residential care homes partner with their local elected officials, community members, faith organizations, healthcare providers, volunteers, stakeholders and the Departments of Social Services and Public Health to address a plethora of challenges. The greatest of these challenges, despite CARCH’s core values of residents aging in place with independence and dignity, is a lack of financial support. Capped funds undermine and erode the residential care home caregiver environment, starting with the building structure and maintenance, day-to-day operations, resident care and activities, stable staffing and much-needed staff training.

CARCH understands the difficult decisions that need to be undertaken in this budget but would urge the committee to consider the impact of the budget’s moratorium on residential care homes, our employees and some of the most vulnerable citizens in the state. Our industry cannot continue to progress without increased support from the state. Without residential care homes the overwhelming majority of our residents would be served in a much more costly
environment—nursing homes, hospitals or return to homeless shelters where many of the Hannah Gray Home residents originated. CARCH urges the committee to 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.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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