Testimony of DR. KULDIP S BHOGAL
Administrator and Owner of High Chase 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 Dr. Kuldip S Bhogal and I am the owner and administrator at High Chase 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 High Chase 5 years ago. I am also a co-owner at April Time RCH in Manchester which we bought in 2007. High Chase had been ignored for over 30 years, was in a dilapidated condition and was in a receivership. It required a lot of capitol, time and effort to bring it up to the State, Town and DPH requirements and code. Our interim rate was, therefore, agreed and signed at $85 per diem before the presiding Harford Superior Court Judge for two and a half years in order to conform with the consent order demanded by the DPH. Over the ensuing three years I utilized all the revenue generated on repairs and renovations that were badly needed. After three years the rate setting Department calculated our rate dependent upon what was spent during the first 6 months in business and then froze it, completely ignoring our agreement set before the Judge three years previously. Effectively, my rate was reduced to $70 per diem from $85 and then capped at this level for all the subsequent years. The result of this cap is that the State is now demanding a crawl back of over $525,000, cash I just do not have. Had the rates not been capped my rate would certainly be near the agreed $85 per diem with all the expenses I incurred. I had to stop all further improvements and even request employee to contribute towards their medical cover. We have been reducing our expenses and are now unable to do that much more. My accountant tells me that we made a loss of over $75,000 last fiscal year. I fear that I shall soon have no choice but to either let the home deteriorate as before or even sell or close it. If this happens it will be a real shame as we have put in a lot of work into this project. We provide excellent care and service in a very cost effective manner to the State as compared to all other alternatives like incarcerations, 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 RCH 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 (over $100 per new employee and 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 are expected to take care of more frail residents which was not the case previously. We see low morale amongst our employees. They have virtually had no increase in their pay. Indeed, we keep losing employees as they can earn a more decent wage doing other jobs. It is a real challenge to replace our employees particularly due to where we are located.

High Chase has been on a cost cutting mission ever since our rates were reduced and then capped, but it has got progressively difficult to do anymore. We badly need funds for unexpected emergencies (recently had to spend near to $10,000 for repairs to our heating and sprinkler systems), repairs and maintenance, maintain adequate insurances, increased payroll to recruit competent staff etc. High Chase needs to replace Its old generator, require new flooring, install new bathrooms and shower rooms, require new furniture, new interior paint and the list goes on and on. Without adequate funding we are unable to do any of these and our job is getting more and more difficult and stressful. I fear, like many homes, we too may soon end up closing our home. Almost all our income depends on the State funding. A decade of frozen rates is now taking its toll on all RCH’s in CT.

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.

Thank you.

Dr. Kuldip S Bhogal
High Chase RCH,
140 River Road
Willington. CT 06279.
Tel: 860-519-9733 (Cell).