

**Testimony of
Carmine Castiglione, Manager/Owner
Garden Brook RCH**

Re: H.B. No. 6446 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN SERVICES.
Human Services Committee Public Hearing, March 4, 2021

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Berthel, Representative Case and Members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Carmine Castiglione and I am the owner and manager of Garden Brook Residential Care Home in Watertown. I am offering testimony against Section 8 of House Bill 6446- An Act Concerning the Governor's Budget Recommendations for Human Services which would establish a rate cap on residential care homes.

I am here today to raise concerns with the Governor's budget recommendations related to residential care homes and express the strong need for a rate increase for residential care homes throughout the state.

My rate increase this month from DSS for my staff who were employed and did not quit while the COVID was at its peak was .37 cents. How insulting is that? We went through some tough times and our employees stayed and worked, risked their lives and their families lives so that some of our most vulnerable would not be left without care.

The pay for aides in our industry is probably between \$12.50 - \$13.50 per hour. During the pandemic, there were kids/teen agers who the previous year maybe worked a part time or seasonal job in the community and then when the pandemic came, they could not go to work, so they stayed home and collected \$600.00 a week plus unemployment benefits, some to the amount of 800.00 per week, while the ones at **TRUE RISK** were left behind, collecting a small paycheck, in most cases half of what someone at home was getting for doing absolutely nothing.

We need to appreciate and reward the staff who are the true Heroes in this field – they are truly amazing, they do not get enough credit, recognition or praise and most definitely not compensated. They absolutely need to be paid a decent and competitive fair wage – They are in my eyes, without a doubt some of the most **ESSENTIAL EMPLOYEES**, if not the most essential.

The consistent inadequate funding is a challenge to our business operations for the services we are required to provide, such as, Medication management, housekeeping services, laundry services, Recreation, Transportation, 3 meals per day, snacks in between, 24hour supervision, a safe environment, monthly inspections, quarterly inspection, annual inspections, updates, improvements, new furniture and the list is endless.

Our industry is always forgotten, we do a great job and go very much un-appreciated and unrecognized. The average rate that DSS reimburses for RCH's is approximately \$2,200.00 per month, (and that is on a high end) Once you break that down to hourly, it is \$3.06 per hour/per resident.

(24 hours per day times 30 days equals 720 hours per month divided by \$2,200.00 per month equals \$3.06 per resident per hour.)

That is the amount a Residential Care Home receives from DSS. How many state funded program rates compare to RCH's – probably none. Our rates have been frozen for years it is about time this committee re-visits our industry rates, which are very antiquated, so that we can continue to keep staff employed, residents safe and the industry viable.

I believe a fair compromise, at minimal would be to allow an increase for payroll, across the board of at least \$3.00 per hour for each employee. Not only is that somewhat reasonable but it is well deserved by these employees who have proved that caring for others is a priority, regardless of the challenges they faced or uncertainty. In reality they could have stayed home collected income, they choose to help where help was needed. A pay increase is way overdue and removing the rate freeze for RCH's needs to come to an end so that our industry can survive and residents will not have to lose their home.

Residential Care Homes need your support, yesterday. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions/concerns.

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