

Testimony of Melanie McClure, Manager Green Lodge of Manchester, Inc.
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, thank you for the opportunity to provide 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.

My name is Melanie McClure and I am the Manager at Green Lodge of Manchester, Inc. located in Manchester, CT. 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.

Green Lodge of Manchester, Inc. is a licensed Residential Care Home with 20 beds. All of our residents are on State assistance and we count on that money to take care of them 24 hours a day 7 days a week all year long. We provide three meals a day, two snacks a day, housekeeping, laundry, recreation, help set up medical appointments and supervise the resident's taking their medications. We also need money to pay our Staff. This has become increasing difficult with the raise of minimum wage and the increase in work due to the pandemic.

The biggest challenge with the lack of rate increases is the ability to pay our employees a fair wage. Never has this been more needed after our workers have put in countless hours of work in a challenging environment for little more than the minimum wage!

We value our employees who deserve so much more for the work they do for a challenging but rewarding population. We have had several workers quit due to not enough pay and too much work.

Unfortunately, paying employees the necessary wages to attract new people to our industry continues to be a challenge resulting in employee turnover. Our industry strives to employ people in long term careers so that they can establish and maintain relationships with our residents. This leads to better long-term health outcomes, stability in the home and savings to our state.

The inconsistent funding also challenges our business operations. We are constantly having to make repairs that are subject to state inspections and yet have virtually no margins to do so

Unlike other providers during the pandemic, we did not see any federal funding to support our work or our employees. The Governor's proposal to enable residential care homes to bill Medicaid acknowledges the need for higher rates. However, our industry has significant concerns with the proposal since it cuts money out of the state budget. That funding has been dedicated to residential care homes and becoming a Medicaid provider is a significant change to our model of care - We need to ensure that our revenue is not decreased or it will jeopardize the sustainability of my home and ability to care for our residents.

We provide a critical service for the state and care for some of the most vulnerable people. We do this for a low cost to the state. My home and other residential care homes throughout the state have had to get by with rates failing to keep up with costs and yet we serve as the safety net for many people with mental health diagnoses and substance abuse issues. Unlike other providers, our residents are almost all state funded limiting our ability to cost shift and make up for low rates.

Please support residential care home funding and raise our rates so that we can keep our great employees and pay them fairer wages while they care for some of the most vulnerable in the state.

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