

## TESTIMONY

Submitted by Tracy Wodatch, President and CEO  
The Connecticut Association for Healthcare at Home

Human Services Committee Public Hearing

**March 4, 2021**

### **HB 6446: The Governor's Budget Recommendations for Human Services**

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Tracy Wodatch, President and CEO of the Connecticut Association for Healthcare at Home. I testified yesterday before the Appropriations Committee on the same issues so bear with me on the repetitious messaging and requests.

The Association is the united voice for the State DPH-licensed and Medicare-certified home health and hospice agencies as well as several non-medical DCP registered home care agencies. Together, our members provide services that foster cost-effective, person-centered home care for Connecticut's Medicaid population in the setting they prefer most – their own homes.

Home-based care is a cost SAVINGS vehicle for the State. According to the CT Dept. of Social Services (DSS) data, The CT Home Care for Elders (CHCPE) Program had saved over \$2.1 BILLION from 2006 to 2018 by keeping Medicaid clients' chronic conditions managed and individuals out of hospital emergency rooms and institutional facilities. (see attached flyer)

Unfortunately, the billions of dollars saved has not been reinvested into our provider sector which is now threatened due to longstanding inadequate Medicaid reimbursement and unreimbursed care such as home visits by social workers. We are also experiencing significant agency consolidation and closures.

Just to clarify, the waiver program provider rates have received two small increases over the past two years to assist agencies in supporting the mandated minimum wage increases. The non-waiver home health services were not included in these increases and have only received a 1% increase since 2007!!! We fully understand that a Medicaid reimbursement rate increase to catch up for more than a decade of reimbursement is not realistic in our current State Budget situation. However, we urge this committee to



align our home health rates with the waiver rates then implement consistent increases year on year to help us continue to serve the Medicaid population. You will hear from several providers today who have made intentional decisions to no longer care for this population or to greatly reduce the numbers served. Our Access Agencies are experiencing significant backlog of timely placements due to difficulty in finding providers to accept cases.

Two additional services that need attention include:

- Continuous Skilled Nursing for medically fragile children and adults—you will hear from 3 specialty providers helping you to understand the challenges they face daily to continue this level of care at the current woefully under-reimbursed rates.
- Medicaid Social Work coverage is long overdue. The COVID pandemic has brought this vital need to the surface. Our home health providers have never had a reimbursable rate for Medicaid Social Work visits yet the need is greater now than ever—the expert skills of a Social Worker assessing a client’s Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) is best done in the client’s home, not in an office. Please consider developing a rate for this purpose so we can adequately serve our clients in their own homes and minimize higher cost settings.

I have also submitted two slides along with my testimony to support the current need for rates to be addressed.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. Feel free to contact me with any questions.

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