

**Testimony of Tina Yeitz, Vice President, CT Association of Residential Care Homes  
Administrator, The Eliza Huntington Memorial Home of Norwich**

**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 Tina Yeitz and I am the Administrator at The Eliza Huntington Memorial Home. I am here today to raise concerns with the Governors budget related to Residential Care Homes and ask you to instead raise our rates at least 5% and provide a \$1 per hour per worker increase for our employees.

Eliza Huntington is a 22 bed facility in Norwich, specifically for Elderly Women. We provide Medication Administration by certified PCA's/RCA.s. All meals and snacks are prepared by license dietary staff. Housekeeping, laundry services, full time recreation and recently with the pandemic we have also begun assisting these residents with technology to be able to maintain doctor appointments and contact with their families. All of these tasks need to be provided within a budget that comes from a daily rate paid by our State, a payment system that has seen no increase for the better part of a decade. This has prevented us from being able to provide consistent pay increases to our employees. Never has there been a time when being able to compensate our teams fairly been more important, yet I still had seven employees that I had to give a \$1 an hour raise to. A task I am glad to do, as they certainly deserve it. Sadly though, in doing this I was unable to provide the remainder of team with an increase. Now I am sure many of you are thinking, "this was no surprise, that should have been factored into the budget".

Well it was until the pandemic hit and we had a whole new set of expenses, more payroll to cover the additional hours everyone had to work, additional cleaning supplies, computers and tablets to accommodate visits and appointments. The list goes on and on but the funding does not. While our industry sees enormous turnover because of our inability to pay incoming competitive rates, those employees who have been with us for many years are also being penalized because we cannot keep up with increases to make them even a little closer to what we have to pay people to even consider coming to work. I personally can tell you that I am blessed with some of the most loyal employees, 15 members of my team total more than 225 years of service. They deserve so much more than I am able to give them, and yet these people will be the first ones in the night before a snow storm and sleep at the facility to ensure that they are there for their shift. Again, I say to you – they deserve better.

It will be one full year on March 13<sup>th</sup> since the order was placed to close our facilities to the public. Let me tell you about the toll this has taken on my team. We have had to

accommodate serving 22 meals three times a day to the residents in their rooms because they could not eat in the dining room together. Now a full year later they are still limited to having to take turns in the dining room as we are still not back to full capacity. We have become the sole source of socialization for many of these ladies who have struggled with missing their families and friends for so long. We have had to watch as our residents deteriorate right before our eyes as the isolation accelerated their dementia.. We have cared for Covid positive residents inside of our facilities even though we are not a medical model, once again asking so much more than we should have to from our teams. We have seen death and sickness and sadness up close and personal and yet still, they are there every day smiling and doing everything in their power to make sure these residents are happy and as entertained as they can be This is a lot on the shoulders of employees that are making less money than a cashier at Stop and Shop.

Residential Care Homes have, for the better part of a decade gone without any kind of increase to our funding. Every year we are here pleading for change to no avail. So this year I ask each of you to think about what it would look like for you if you were told that the salary you made in 2011 was what you needed to survive on today. This is, in its simplest form, what you are asking us to do.

Now more than ever funding must be found for us. We have been forced to navigate this pandemic without the benefit of any of the federal funding that was given to the hospitals and nursing homes because of that fact that we are state funded. You as the representatives of our state have a responsibility to make sure this happens.

Thank you for your time today.