



**Testimony
Human Services Committee
March 25, 2021**

HB 6636

SB 1054 (Opposed)

Submitted by Janine Fay, President/CEO VNA Community Healthcare & Hospice

Sen. Moore, Rep. Abercrombie and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee. I am CEO of VNA Community Healthcare & Hospice, a licensed and Medicare certified home health agency serving New Haven and Middlesex Counties. We serve hundreds of Medicaid patients a year and as you know, providing healthcare in the home is the most cost effective approach to care and more importantly it is the place individuals prefer to be.

We could all swap stories of what a year this has been and I know we are all seeking an end to this pandemic. We have tolerated enormous change and uncertainty, yet with all the changes there has been a constant issue plaguing our industry. That is the lack of funding for home healthcare. This constant has gone on for well over a decade and simply cannot continue!

The pandemic not only brought financial burden to providers but it has added to the desire of families to keep their loved ones at home and not in institutions. The result is expectations of healthcare in the home continue to be on the rise. This demand is not going away as we are an aging society living with more chronic illnesses.

I want to share an example of just one Medicaid patient that demonstrates the level of care required in the home. This individual had a traumatic event that left her paralyzed. She needed physical therapy and occupational therapy in order to optimize her functional capabilities, home health aide to assist with bathing, and nursing to assess and teach regarding skin care, and bowel and bladder training. This individual had a minimal support system which deteriorated even further due to the stress over her high level of needs. She also was in between housing arrangements. Medical social work visits were needed but Medicaid does not cover so we had to render this service for free. All together we provided care for almost four months.

When analyzing this patient's Medicaid reimbursement against our costs, the Medicaid revenue fell short of our direct costs by several thousand dollars and obviously didn't cover any indirect expenses. The lack of funding for social work intervention is an added insult to already low reimbursement. This type of losing situation is why agencies decide to limit or outright decline Medicaid patients. While you may think most patients don't require that much assistance, we are finding the majority of patients do require multidisciplinary care.

A few years ago our financial losses were not sustainable so we made the difficult decision to limit the number of Medicaid patients we could help for the very reason reimbursement does not cover costs. It was the only fiscally responsible thing to do.

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To summarize, the home health industry entered this past year with significant underfunding and then the pandemic came and further exacerbated it. The only way to start correcting this untenable situation is to utilize the enhanced Medicaid funding in the short term and for the longer term increase the rates.

We are a proven cost savings vehicle for the State which should make this an obvious investment.

I also want to state my opposition to SB 1054. I fully support quality oversight however this bill will add costly, duplicative oversight and divert dollars that desperately need to be directed towards providers. There are currently many mechanisms for patients/families to file concerns and complaints, for example DPH, DCP, and Elderly Protective Services.

I believe we all have the same goal, to allow individuals and families to reach their optimal health status in the home setting. This requires access to the expertise of home healthcare. Our current status as a provider network can only be described as tenuous and fragile. This does not bode well for our ability to meet the needs of the Medicaid population now or in the future. Investment is necessary NOW.

I have repeatedly provided testimony regarding the inadequate funding for our industry and I will continue to do so until we see change. Each year I hope this will be the year, please don't disappoint me.

Thank you and if you have any questions you may contact me at jfay@vna-commh.org