



TESTIMONY

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

Human Services Committee Public Hearing

March 25, 2021

SUPPORT HB 6636: An Act Concerning Covid-19 and Enhanced Federal Medicaid Funding

OPPOSE SB 1054: An Act Establishing a State Home Health and Hospice Ombudsman

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.

The Association is the united voice for the DPH-licensed home health and hospice agencies as well as several non-medical Homemaker-Companion 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. Unfortunately to date, the billions of dollars saved has not been reinvested into our provider sector which is now threatened due to longstanding inadequate Medicaid reimbursement compounded by the costs incurred during the COVID pandemic. We are experiencing significant agency consolidation and closures.

With unsustainable Medicaid rates, the remaining agencies have been forced to make the difficult decisions to decrease caring for Medicaid clients or stop altogether!

HB 6636 is a tremendous opportunity to begin righting the ship. We are genuinely thankful for the 6.2% enhanced match outlined in this bill, but moreover, the recently signed federal American Rescue Plan offers an additional 10% FMAP specific for Home and Community-Based Services!

We believe that the easiest and quickest way to distribute these funds would be to use a similar formula and process as when the Medicare relief funds were direct deposited in provider accounts based on their Medicare claims volume times a set percentage. OPM and DSS will soon find out how much money CT will receive specifically for this 10% match and can create a formula based on each agency's Medicaid claims from a set time



period. The amount calculated can then be direct deposited in each agency's account. Agencies should not need to apply or complete detailed forms, it should be automatic based on claims.

Such immediate relief funding would help agencies not only recover from the pandemic but potentially begin to look at expanding Medicaid services. However, this funding is finite and time limited (April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022). It is imperative that the legislature also find dollars to reinvest long term into our growing need for home care services. We recommend at least a 4% increase to current rates for both waiver and non-waiver services provided by licensed home health agencies and homemaker-companion agencies. This increase needs to be effective July 1, 2021 with consistent cost of living adjustments year on year thereafter.

Regarding SB 1054, we oppose the addition of a home health and hospice ombudsman for several reasons but mainly that it is duplicative of oversight already in place through DPH, DCP and Elderly Protective Services. It will also cost the state additional funds that should be invested in the sustainability of our providers.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

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