Bloomfield
Center for Nursing & Rehabilitation

March 1, 2023
To Members of the Appropriations Committee:

Concerning Skilled Nursing Facility Funding For SFY 2024 and SFY 2025

My name is Portia Wise Bachman. I am Administrator at Bloomfield Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation in Bloomfield, Connecticut. This facility has been providing nursing home care in our community for more than 40 years. We are a 120 bed nursing home, and we have 150 employees working at our facility, and we are members of the Connecticut Association of Health Care Facilities (CAHCF).

A Period of Trauma *and* Resilience for our Nursing Home Residents and Caregivers

Never have we had to endure this degree of trauma as healthcare workers. Now, at three years into this unrelenting COVID-19 pandemic and public health emergency, I can say that our nursing home, the residents we serve, and our employees, continue to be challenged like in no other time in our history of providing services in Connecticut. I can *also* say that our nursing home is as determined as ever, and we feel that each week we are getting closer to a time when we can say the pandemic is behind us.

Ravaging Inflation, Severe Staffing Shortages is Hindering Admissions, Increasing Labor Costs and Slowing the Nursing Home Recovery

We have never before experienced this level of inflation in concert with the ongoing staffing crisis. Our staffing shortages are affecting our ability to admit new patients at the same time they are increasing our labor costs at an increasing pace. These are the top issues that are not addressed in the budget recommendation. We are unable to keep up with inflation. Due to staffing shortages, we employ agency staff and pay them as much as 2.5 times our rate for LPNs and RNs. These licensed employees and agency cnas do not have the knowledge of our residents, or the same level of commitment to the quality of care we want to deliver. Our food costs have skyrocketed. Increased egg prices have been widely televised. Our meats have increased even more, some items as much as 23%. The proposed funding for nursing homes doesn't recognize what is happening on inflation, and we are asking you to recognize the real inflation that we are experiencing in the budget.

The severe staffing shortages our nursing home faced during the pandemic are not letting up. We routinely use temporary agency staff or we would be unable to take hospital admissions. We are paying increased overtime, shift differentials, call-in bonuses, and we have increased the use of nursing pools; all of which cost beyond what the state is paying in Medicaid rates. We need more resources to boost the pay of our extraordinary employees, but the proposed budget doesn't address this issue.

The resources the state legislature previously provided us to boost staff pay made all the difference over the last two years, but our employees are losing ground against inflation, just as we are. More funding is needed in the budget to address the unbelievable inflation we are facing and to help us with our soaring labor costs.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,
Portia Wise Bachman
Administrator

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