

Name: Jennifer Malone-Seixas
Title: President
Organization or Agency: Filosa and HANCOCK HALL
Topic: SB00989 - AAC NURSING HOMES.
Opposes

Testimony:

RE: SB00989 An Act Concerning Nursing Homes

Thank you for the opportunity to share my concerns on why passing the proposed 4.1 Direct Care Nursing Home Staffing Mandate is not only ill-conceived but nothing less than a punishment for an industry that has worked tirelessly to provide care to our most vulnerable population during the worst pandemic of our lifetime. We have suffered greatly over the past three years as a workforce of caregivers. Plain and simple- this mandate won't help the industry because the workforce has been shattered. The overall costs, both financial and in terms of quality outcomes, of working with and relying on agency staff are extreme and unsustainable.

Filosa for Nursing and Rehabilitation and HANCOCK HALL have a long history in Connecticut beginning in 1947 when my grandmother, Barbara Filosa, left her job as an RN at Danbury Hospital to bring people needing care into her home while caring for her own chronically ill husband and young daughter. For many decades, our facilities have provided consistently high quality and compassionate care to generations of community members. Both facilities have maintained Medicare 5-star overall ratings since the inception of the program and have been named two of the best skilled nursing facilities in Connecticut.

For nearly our entire 75+ year history we were able to operate without the use of "pool" or agency staff. That ended in September 2022. We were pressured to increase and maintain occupancy above 85% but without the staff necessary to do it properly. So we had to find a way. For facilities of our size (Filosa is 64 beds and Hancock Hall is 96 beds), we spend close to \$60,000 annually on Indeed Ads, we attend job fairs, we open our doors to area schools for clinical rotations to build community and as a means of recruitment, we post on LinkedIn and Facebook, we offer robust recruitment and retention bonuses, and still the struggle is a daily, relentless effort to find quality staff to care for our residents. I am the former Administrator at Hancock Hall and now COO of the facilities whose first task daily is to review the nursing staff schedule. Along with our nursing department scheduler, Directors of Nursing, and Administrators, I text, call, offer bonuses, gift cards, any and all forms of incentives to get people to pick up shifts and to commit to our facilities.

Investing in multifaceted initiatives to rebuild our long term care workforce must be the highest priority for all of us: legislators, regulators, and providers. I ask that you direct your words, energy, and dollars to incentivize entry (and re-entry) into this workforce. Make immigration reform a priority and an essential component of this effort. Here's an example. There is a technical high school in our area that we partner with as a clinical site for their CNA students. Many of them are 18 years old or older, have completed all CNA training, passed their exams, are ready willing and able to work, but... we are unable to legally hire them. They are undocumented but educated with the skills that our community desperately needs. What a terrible shame!

I hope you fully consider the reality of our industry in Connecticut. We are all committed to providing the highest quality care and realize that a strong and complete workforce is our greatest resource. The current, proposed nursing home staffing mandate will not achieve this goal.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully submitted,
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