



March 5, 2019

Written testimony of Deborah S. Torrey, Administrator, Shady Knoll Health Center. Concerning the Governor's Recommended FY 2020 and FY 2021 Proposed Budget

Good evening. My name is Deborah Torrey, Administrator of Shady Knoll Health Center in Seymour, Connecticut. Shady Knoll just celebrated our 25th Anniversary of providing quality care for our residents; both short term rehabilitation, long term care, and hospice care in the Naugatuck Valley. Shady Knoll is home for up to 128 residents and employs 220 employees from the Valley, New Haven, Bridgeport, and Waterbury areas.

Shady Knoll Health Center is managed by Athena Health Care Systems; 1 of the nation's premier skilled nursing facility management companies. As a company, we boast the highest census in Connecticut, largely due to the quality of the care we provide and the quality of our facilities. I represent the devoted caregivers, the RNs, LPNs, and CNAs; the dining services, therapy, therapeutic recreation, social services, housekeeping and laundry workers who all want what I want----the ability to deliver the highest quality care experience to anyone who comes to Shady Knoll. As a team, we have worked hard to partner with Griffin Hospital, to reduce hospital re-admissions, to learn and to provide specialized clinical services (cardiac rehabilitation, stroke recovery, IV therapy, joint replacement, dementia care, respite care). These people do an amazing job, and I am so grateful to them, and proud of them, for everything they do especially since Connecticut hasn't made nursing home funding a priority for a very long time.

We are challenged everyday with providing quality care that our elderly deserves, and our short-term rehabilitation demands. With constraints coming from multiple directions, both financial and regulatory, we fight to do our jobs well. We cannot continue down this road without Connecticut policy makers recognizing that substantial Medicaid help is overdue to assure the quality care we all want to provide.

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Elected leaders need to hear loud and clear that delivering the care everyone wants for their loved ones is getting harder and harder to provide. Elected leaders need to understand that the nursing home population is more clinically complex than it was twenty years ago. Gone are the days of the cute little gray-haired ladies who need help with their medication management. Our residents require our services due to critical conditions; we see more chronic disease, much more dementia and Alzheimer's disease than in years past. Nursing home residents also have greater behavioral health needs-----mental health and substance use disorders are common.

We cannot compete to retain or recruit staff to serve a more complex population with unemployment so low without more Medicaid help. The minimum wage increases proposed alone will require substantial new Medicaid funding for nursing homes.

Please help us deliver the care we all want, and our residents deserve. Please make long overdue nursing home funding a priority in this year's budget.

On behalf of everyone at Shady Knoll Health Center, thank you for your support. Our residents, their families, and our employees are counting on you.