



CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION FOR HEALTHCARE AT HOMESM

CONNECTICUT MUST FUND HOME HEALTH AND HOME CARE

Connecticut Association for Healthcare at Home calls on State to include home care providers in American Rescue Plan funding

WALLINGFORD, CT – July 1, 2021 - The Connecticut Association for Healthcare at Home (CAHCH), a non-profit member organization of skilled home health, hospice and non-medical home care providers, held a press conference on the north steps of the Capitol in Hartford, CT on Thursday to urge legislators, the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) to include home care providers in the American Rescue Plan funding, especially the 10% additional federal match dollars for home and community-based providers. The Association outlined its request in this [proposal](#) sent to DSS and OPM this week.

Collectively, the Association's membership (home health and home care) provides services to nearly 20,000 CT state funded residents, yet this sector of the healthcare continuum has experienced severe workforce and Medicaid funding shortages for several years. This shortage has been exacerbated by the pandemic and the ramped-up state minimum wage requirements.

According to Tracy Wodatch, President and CEO of the Association, "this is now an existential crisis. The most recently approved biennial budget sent a strong negative message that home care is not a priority even

though we have been able to save the state \$508.4 million in FY 2019 and \$2.5 billion in the last fourteen years. The state has a \$2.3 billion surplus but strikingly chose not to re-invest in the home and community-based providers who are undoubtedly a savings vehicle for the state and are the preferred setting for care."

With significant Medicaid increases to other parts of the care continuum such as nursing homes and group homes, the home care provider rates have remained stagnant, causing more and more agencies to scale back or end services altogether to state funded seniors and the disabled. Wodatch adds, "they simply cannot compete for staffing due to an inability to pay competitive wages and benefits. This unbalanced funding will only work in opposition to the state's rebalancing plan to keep people in their homes as it will force more to be inappropriately and unhappily institutionalized at an unnecessary expense to the State."

"It is crucial that we continue to support home health care as much as we can, as this service is a significant lifeline for far too many in our state in need," said Sen. Saud Anwar.

"Especially when home health care can reduce the strain on our health system, and with trends indicating only more individuals will need care in the future, we must ensure our current systems are capable and ready to take on the needs of the future."

Representative William Petit said, "It is critically important to adequately reimburse our home care providers as they provide cost effective

care and allow dramatically better quality of life for our loved ones.”

“All you have to do is read the headlines,” said Gloria Merritt, Vice President of Behavioral Health Clinical Services at Elara Caring. “We face a tsunami of mental health needs coming out of the pandemic. Without immediate investment in home care, the situation is about to get much worse. Our most acute psychiatric patients depend on home care to keep them in the community, and I simply do not understand undervaluing this critical component of the mental health treatment delivery system. Immediate relief is needed to prevent further destabilization of a mental health system nearing a breaking point.”

Richard Bernier of Waterbury and father of patient Emery, said, “Emery was born in 2013. He spent roughly the first 6 ½ years of his life in the hospital. After a litany of medical challenges, the hospital stabilized Emery so that he could safely go home, but the process of getting him out of the hospital and into home care was very challenging. There were (and are) very few home health agencies that specialize in around-the-clock nursing care for medically complex children. There was a backlog of other patients awaiting home health care. We were told it was due to lack of staffing. Finally, on September 9, 2019, we were able to bring Emery home with Allumé Home Care. After 6 ½ years in the hospital, I have been able to care for him safely at home with the support of our team of nurses that come every day. In those two years, Emery has had excellent overall health with the nursing interventions we have at home and has not had to return to the hospital during this time.”

“I have been caring for my elderly mother at home for over 10 years,” said Brenda Marks of Windsor Locks. “Having companions in my home has enabled me to begin working and

provided me with comfort knowing my mother is well cared for. If agencies are no longer able to provide these services, what happens to my mother? Do I have to quit my job and not have the ability to leave my house? I can’t imagine the state would allow so many recipients of their program to be left without proper care.”

[Click here](#) for the link to the Facebook Live video capturing the entire press conference. Special thanks to all members who participated (Gloria Merritt from Elara Caring, Coco Sellman from Allume Home Care and Ann Wilson from Companions & Homemakers), to our legislative supporters (Representatives Holly Cheeseman and Cara Pavalock-Dimato) and to our families especially Rachael Botts.

The major news channels and reporters were present at the press conference...Below is a compilation of news articles and media pieces to date:

AP News (Susan Haigh):

<https://apnews.com/article/ct-state-wire-business-coronavirus-pandemic-health-82bb60ab9df6522c458a0c22973727d5>

WFSB (Susan Raff):

https://www.wfsb.com/news/home-health-providers-struggle-with-workforce-shortage/article_b2216f30-da97-11eb-ac67-236a36b4ebdb.html

WTNH (Jodi Latina):

<https://www.wtnh.com/news/connecticut/urgent-call-to-fund-elder-home-care-industry-in-connecticut/>

WTNH (Sarah Cody):

<https://www.wtnh.com/on-air/connecticut-families/home-nurse-shortage-many-connecticut-families-in-crisis-with-medically-fragile-kids-enduring-long->

[hospital-stays/?fbclid=IwAR3OJVh4ReE4u3f-7_rcVveD1vi-2zfOC7DoVr_LoDfowgA8M9YK9aK3w_I](#)

CT Mirror (Op-Ed by Coco Sellman):

<https://ctmirror.org/category/ct-viewpoints/raise-medicaid-rates-to-bring-medically-complex-kids-in-home-care/>

WNBC (Christine Stuart):

https://www.nbcconnecticut.com/news/local/home-care-faces-twin-crisis-employment-and-medicaid-reimbursement/2518993/?fbclid=IwAR2U29MOI5kjq5hBJXOF6kkJmeG3YsGDh39cCAIe8o8vYs1jTBJwV_j-UA