

State lawmakers must increase Medicaid funding for nursing homes



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By Bill White

I am a third-generation Connecticut nursing home provider that along with some 200 other nursing homes, cares for more than 20,000 Connecticut residents. Delivering these services has been my family's privilege since the 1950s. Our facilities are made up of the most heroic and dedicated caregivers, who show up to work, day in and day out, ready to provide high-quality care to every single one of our residents.

We continue to work hard to deliver for our residents but need help from our lawmakers. The past few years have been difficult for all of us in health care, but particularly difficult in long-term care. We have dealt with a historic pandemic that nursing homes are still recovering from.

Connecticut nursing homes have faced challenges for quite some time, but following a once-in-a-lifetime public health crisis, our problems have ballooned to the point where we can no longer just 'make do' or sweep our problems under the rug. We are at a breaking point.

Our state's Medicaid reimbursement rates have been artificially suppressed to historically low levels and have not kept pace with the cost of providing services. This has been a problem for decades, especially for nursing homes that primarily rely on Medicaid funding to operate. This funding goes towards the costs it takes to care for our residents, from basic operations to staffing.

We need funding to operate, to pay competitive wages and benefits and to upgrade and renovate our facilities so that we remain prepared to deliver quality care to an exploding number of older Connecticut residents that some refer to as the "silver tsunami." Nursing home operators are losing ground against rampant inflation and cost increases we have never seen before, not in all the decades we have been serving Connecticut elders.

In Connecticut, we have already seen [several closures](#). Every closure disrupts residents' lives, leaving caregivers without jobs and leaving Connecticut cities and towns without an integral member of their communities.

Connecticut needs to address this problem now. If we wait, it may be too late for many of the nursing homes in our state. Our state policy makers in the executive and legislative branches need to be proactive to get out in front, instead of being reactive to the ongoing challenges nursing homes are facing. We must invest in our nursing homes now.

Bill White is the president of Beechwood Post Acute and Transitional Care in New London.

