

CAHCF/CCAL

Connecticut Association of Health Care Facilities
Connecticut Center for Assisted Living

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Written testimony of Matthew V. Barrett, President and CEO of the Connecticut Association of Health Care Facilities (CAHCF):

S.B. No. 764 (COMM) AN ACT PROHIBITING "ON-CALL" SHIFT SCHEDULING.

This bill would require a nursing home to pay an employee one-half of the employee's regular rate for any scheduled work hours the employee does not work due to the nursing home cancelling or reducing the employee's scheduled work hours: (1) After the employee reports to work such scheduled work hours, or (2) Less than seventy-two hours prior to the commencement of such scheduled work hours.

Scheduling restrictions of this type would present considerable challenges for Connecticut nursing homes. The nursing home model of care relies heavily on needed flexibility with staffing because of the often dramatic fluctuation in the resident census. While all nursing homes have core staffing requirements, it is essential that nursing homes have the flexibility to staff based on the resident census and the care needs of those residents. There are many variables in the staffing equation as it relates to care requirements of the resident population on any given day. There are also inherent uncertainties in predicting the number of admissions and discharges that will actually be experienced on a daily basis. Through no fault of the nursing home, staffing needs can often change on short notice and staff that was anticipated to be needed based upon the census and care needs of the resident may change daily. Nursing homes must be given the flexibility to staff to meet the needs of the residents, just as hospitals, home health agencies and other providers are, without incurring financial penalties. For these reasons, CAHCF asks that Connecticut nursing home be excluded from the bill's requirements.

S.B. No. 2 (COMM) AN ACT INCREASING THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE.

Connecticut nursing homes acknowledge the importance of addressing issues related to increasing the minimum wage to \$15.00 this session. Our association asks that as the Labor Committee deliberates on various bills to increase the minimum wage that members address the significant impact this policy will have on Connecticut nursing homes.

Specifically, increasing the minimum wage as proposed will have an (1) Immediate significant impact for nursing home employees now earning below the minimum wage; (2) Ongoing significant impact each year as the minimum wage rises; (3) Immediate and ongoing significant impact due to the real wage pressure and commensurate wage increases that will be inevitable for all workers earning over the minimum wage. In short, nursing home operators maintain as the minimum wage rises, so too will the wages of those earning over the minimum wage.

Significant Medicaid resources will be required to address these issues for Connecticut nursing homes. However, no increased Medicaid funds have been proposed for this purpose at this time. Worse, some \$90 million in funding to nursing homes set aside for inflationary rate increases has been proposed for elimination in the Governor's biennial budget recommendation now before the Connecticut General Assembly. Moreover, there has been no significant Medicaid investment in general nursing home rates in over a decade. Nursing home inflationary rate increases are needed now more than ever due to the significantly higher costs nursing homes will inevitably experience as the minimum wage increases to \$15.00, and is layered on top of the tremendous upward pressure on wages already present in the health care system because of very low unemployment. It should be noted that highly regulated health care sectors like nursing homes where the government sets the price for services in Medicaid and Medicare payments are unable to absorb the higher costs, especially when state action mandates the higher costs. Connecticut nursing homes are unable to increase their prices to mitigate the increased costs. This is why it's essential that Medicaid funding be significantly increased to reflect the certainty of higher costs and unaddressed needs from a decade of underfunding.

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the difficult issues this bill presents for Connecticut nursing homes.

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