



State of Connecticut

SENATE

STATE CAPITOL
300 CAPITOL AVENUE
HARTFORD, CT 06106-1591
SENATE REPUBLICAN OFFICES

September 5, 2019

Senator Martin Looney
President Pro Tempore
Legislative Office Building, Room 3300
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Representative Joe Aresimowicz
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Legislative Office Building, Room 4100
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Dear Senator Looney and Speaker Aresimowicz:

We are writing to request that the legislature hold a special session so that we can fix the problems your budget has created for multiple nursing homes across our state, putting them at risk of closure and negatively impacting the seniors in their care.

Multiple Democrat lawmakers have now expressed regret over their decision to cut this funding and have called for a delay or revising of the policy. We have seen letters from rank and file Democrat lawmakers, as well as from lawmakers who had a direct hand in crafting policy to cut Medicaid funding, negatively impacting seniors. Those calls ring hollow because the same majority party that crafted this policy could secure a special legislative session so that action can be taken and the budget can be fixed.

As you are aware, the Fiscal Year 2020/2021 budget crafted by Democrat lawmakers and Governor Lamont reduced Medicaid payments to certain nursing homes by \$5.3 million over the next two years, putting nine nursing homes at risk of closure. To achieve these savings, the budget contains a policy change that results in a reduction of Medicaid funding to multiple nursing homes. This policy disregards the serious and traumatic consequences closures would have on vulnerable nursing home residents including persons with dementia. Such closures could potentially push people into a community that does not have the proper supports. To make matters worse, the state budget passed by Democrats also reduces funding for the Connecticut Home Care Program by \$7 million annually, making it that much harder for seniors to access the entry point to successful aging in place. Therefore, the overall impact of your budget both hurts those receiving care in nursing homes, and makes it harder for people displaced by potential nursing home closures to successfully age in place.

We absolutely need to hold nursing homes accountable to ensure safety and quality care. But this policy puts money before people. It is discouraging nursing home facilities from caring for the most vulnerable, all just to free up money to spend elsewhere in the budget. There are already procedures in place to hold nursing homes accountable when they make errors. This policy does not enhance that system. It just makes it harder for facilities to improve and offer care to patients with more complex issues. The federal quality measure scores used to determine who is penalized are not Connecticut centric measures. It is odd that Connecticut Democrats would choose to utilize a Washington based method related to a women's health care issue, as nearly 70% of nursing home residents are women. The federal quality measures do not properly account for patients' acuity levels or comorbidities. A facility

that cares for individuals with more critical care needs could receive a misleading negative score, reducing health care access because of a patient's preexisting conditions. We have already heard that the administration does not intend to consider these federal quality measure scores when implementing this policy, so there should be no issue in adjusting the budget to eliminate the use of these ratings. Occupancy levels also should be looked at on a case by case basis and perhaps better defined in legislation as many large facilities keep beds open to hold on to their capacity and maintain room for different care needs as the Connecticut senior population is expected to grow significantly in the coming years.

Republicans have opposed this Medicaid reduction and voted against this cut when it came before the Human Services Committee and when it came before the full legislature in the state budget bill. We urge you to stand up and take action to restore these funds. In a \$40 billion budget, finding \$5.3 million over the next two years to restore this Medicaid funding is not an unachievable task. Should you agree to pursue a special session for this purpose, Republicans would like to work together to identify savings or cuts elsewhere in the budget that can be used to restore this funding and to prioritize support for vulnerable seniors.

We urge you to acknowledge the pain your budget will cause and take real action to right this wrong. We need more than words. We can and we must restore this funding. We would like to work together to do so. People need to come before partisanship and politics.

We look forward to further discussions once you have committed to a special session.

Sincerely,




Len Fasano
Senate Republican Leader - R-34




Kevin Witkos
Senate Republican Leader Pro Tempore - R-8



Gennaro Bizzarro
State Senator - R-6



Eric Berthel
State Senator - R-32



Dan Champagne
State Senator - R-35



Paul Formica
State Senator - R-20

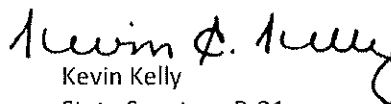
Senator Looney and Speaker Aresimowicz

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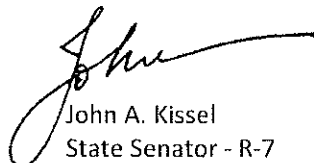
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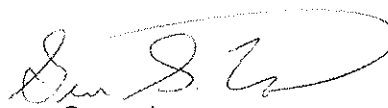
Tony Hwang
State Senator - R-28



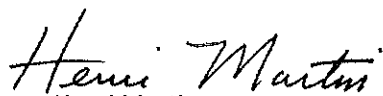
Kevin Kelly
State Senator - R-21



John A. Kissel
State Senator - R-7



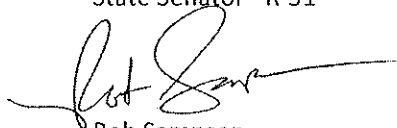
George Logan
State Senator - R-17



Henri Martin
State Senator - R-31



Craig Miner
State Senator - R-30



Rob Sampson
State Senator - R-16



Heather Somers
State Senator - R-18