



Massachusetts Senior Coalition  
66 Bonanno Court  
Methuen, MA 01844

October 31, 2019

My name is Deanna Milone-Bonanno. I am a vendor of nursing home services who has been serving the industry for over twenty years, providing uniforms and other clothing items to over 150 facilities. I am testifying this morning based on my years of personal experience and serious concerns that I have regarding the future of nursing homes.

When I walk into the nursing homes, and I do on a daily basis, I can see the dire impact inadequate funding has on the residents and staff. It amazes me that residents are so aware of so many homes closing, it's a topic of discussion in many of the facilities I visit.

Medicaid is the largest payor for nursing home care, but the Medicaid program simply does not provide the funding needed to take care of these vulnerable residents and more must be done. This is why I along with thousands of others have come together to form the Massachusetts Senior Coalition, a statewide coalition of nursing home resident families, staff, vendors and providers. I proudly serve as Chair of the Coalition, which has filed and is advocating for passage of a 2020 ballot question that would increase funding for nursing home care in Massachusetts. We need to act quickly to address nursing home funding and preserve this critical health care service for current and future generations who no longer can be cared for at home.

The Coalition opposes MassHealth's nursing home Medicaid reimbursement rates. Consistent with our ballot question, we strongly believe that the state should

use 2018 costs in determining reimbursement rates and we also believe that all costs associated with taking care of residents ought to be paid for by MassHealth.

While it is true that nursing home rates and funding are being updated this year, I am here to tell you that much more needs to be done to fund nursing homes in order to protect residents and families who rely on this vital service.

In the last two years, financial pressures have forced over 30 nursing homes to close, many which I have served, leaving residents with few options to receive the care they need to live out their final days in dignity. For facilities that are able to keep their doors open, residents are underfunded by \$38 per day, or more than \$13,000 per year. It is heart wrenching and, in many cases, life threatening to transfer elderly patients out of their homes. I am aware of many situations where family members have noted that transferring their family after a facility closure had an irreparable negative impact. Simply put, it turns their world upside down. For many residents and families, the transition to long term care is already a difficult decision, but fear that the nursing home may close should not be an additional burden.

It's painful to say but, in light of the state's failure to pay reasonably, it feels like Massachusetts has just given up on nursing home residents. I know that's not true but that is the impression I have.

I am here to ask you to increase allowable funding for nursing facilities so that our elders and disabled individuals who require this high level of care get the care they need and deserve. I want to see more realistic and higher Medicaid reimbursement to stabilize nursing homes and improve salaries and benefits for nurses and nurses' aides and all other workers within the homes.

We need to do better for our residents and the dedicated staff. I ask you to step up to the plate and reimburse facilities appropriately.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deanna Milone-Bonanno". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

Deanna Milone-Bonanno

Chair of the Massachusetts Senior Coalition