

**Testimony on HB 1
March 6, 2017
Plymouth, NH**

Good evening, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. My name is Chandra Engelbert. I am the CEO of Pemi-Baker Community Health in Plymouth, NH. My agency provides home care and hospice services. I'm here on behalf of the Granite State Home Health Association regarding the Choices for Independence Program – often referred to as CFI.

Over 2,500 Granite Staters depend on CFI. These are low income, medically vulnerable individuals who qualify for nursing homes, but who choose to remain in their own homes with the assistance from home care providers. Home Health agencies throughout the state provide CFI clients with nursing visits, home health aides, personal care and homemaker services. It costs the State about \$17,500 per year to provide care for a CFI client at home, compared to more than \$56,000 for a nursing home. CFI is a good investment.

Unfortunately, the CFI program has been underfunded for years and the provider network is deteriorating. Most agencies lose money providing CFI care. There are parts of the state – especially rural areas -- where home care agencies can't accommodate the needs of these vulnerable citizens. And healthcare workforce shortages make it harder for agencies to recruit and retain workers.

The Governor has proposed a Workforce Initiative to raise rates for providers. In his budget speech, he specifically mentioned licensed nursing assistants who provide home health aide services. However, DHHS has not recommended a rate increase for home health aides. While agencies appreciated a modest rate increase in the last biennium, the rates are still too low to sustain these important services. We ask that you consider increasing the funding for CFI home health services by 5% for nurses and homemakers, and 8% for home health aides and personal care providers, which are the most hard-to-fill positions.

In Rumney, a home care nurse assures that an 89-year-old woman can still manage her daily diabetes regimen. In Bristol, a home health aide helps a 93-year-old gentleman with painful arthritis and failing vision safely take a shower twice a week. A personal care service provider visits an aging woman in Campton every day to help her out of bed, get dressed, and prep her meals. These people are old Yankees – they want to be at home. They don't want to burden anyone. But they need – and deserve – our help. Please fund the CFI program so that home care agencies can continue to care for these most fragile citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.