

# GRANITE STATE HOME CARE & HOSPICE ASSOCIATION

## **Testimony in Opposition to HB 255,** relative to shift differential pay for employees who work overnight

January 16, 2019

Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. I am Gina Balkus, CEO of the Granite State Home Health and Hospice Association, which advocates for home care and hospice agencies and the people they serve. I am here to speak in opposition to HB 255.

Many home care and hospice employees, such as nurses and personal care providers, work during the night to care for clients. Their work schedule is already considered in their wages. While we appreciate the good intention of this bill, we do not believe that a law should mandate a shift differential and the amount of that differential. In this period of workforce shortage, the market already influences wage structures.

It's important to understand that the primary payors for most home care and hospice agencies are Medicaid and Medicare. These are government funded programs with set reimbursement rates. New Hampshire's reimbursement rates for Medicaid and the Choices for Independence Program, which helps nursing home eligible patients live at home with supports, are woefully inadequate. Medicaid home care rates have been unchanged since 2006, while CFI rates had one-time rate increase in 2015. To put it in perspective, the state's reimbursement rate for CFI personal care services has increased just 88 cents per hour in the past 12 years. Mandating a \$2 per hour shift differential would likely cause the providers who serve CFI patients to limit services to day time only, which would harm the clients who need care.

I hope you can appreciate the difficulty HB 255 poses for health care employers. We strive to pay our employees appropriately, especially for overnight work. However, we oppose the mandate in HB 255. We urge you to find this bill as inexpedient to legislate and let market forces prevail.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I am happy to answer any questions.

