

Protect Hospice Care in Connecticut

By State Representative
Vincent J. Candelora

As we continue to struggle with the budget in Hartford and vote various bills out of committees for consideration on the House and Senate floors, a tempest is brewing from proposed regulations by the Department of Public Health. That agency proposed to revise our hospice regulations, which govern the end-of-life treatment for our most vulnerable patients. Connecticut has enjoyed the best care in the country with our own Connecticut Hospice of Branford serving as a beacon for hospice care. All this may change dramatically as a result of one bureaucrat's proposal.

The department claims that the state needs to update its regulations that have not been reviewed in 30 years. This reason falls short as a valid justification for revising our regulations. If it's not broken, don't fix it, and

OPINION



hospice care in Connecticut is one area of our health care system that isn't broken and actually works well. Anyone who has had to go through the experience of caring for a loved one in need of hospice care appreciates the full set of services provided, from spiritual to physical.

Under current law, Connecticut Hospice of Branford operates under a specialty hospital license. It is the only one of its kind in Connecticut. Hospice care can also be provided in homes and in other facilities throughout the state. This license requires certain standards, including having on-site doctors, nurses, and pharmaceutical and religious services. The new proposed regulations would repeal this license and reduce the

standards statewide under the guise of increasing access to care. The proposed regulations reduce minimum staff requirements for patient care by eliminating doctor-to-patient and nurse-to-patient ratios. The proposed regulations also reduce hospice clinical experience requirements for directors and eliminate the requirements for on-site physicians and pharmacist.

These new regulations are being promoted as a way to improve access to hospice care. Connecticut, however, can do better than reducing standards, eliminating the specialty hospital license for Connecticut Hospice of Branford, and thus creating an avenue for for-profit entities to open up facilities. If it's not broken, don't fix it, and hospice care in Connecticut is not broken.

Vincent Candelora represents East Haven, North Branford, and Wallingford in the Connecticut General Assembly.

Le
Fric
slot
20:

Te
E
stal
dire
atte
06:
20: