

THE CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION
for *Home Care, Inc*

June 3, 2003

Letters, Northeast Magazine
285 Broad Street
Hartford, CT 06115

Dear Editor,

The so-called “\$400,000 Nurse” cited in a recent commentary [Northeast, June 1, 2003] should be a concern for taxpayers, if that actually reflected what even a small portion of home care nurses make. However, last year the average salary for a psychiatric home care nurse was \$53,600, or about \$26 an hour for a standard workweek. But due to the nursing shortage increasing numbers of nurses are working longer than a standard workweek.

Kevin Rennie’s notion that the taxpayers will not reap the savings from last month’s 39 percent reduction in Medicaid home nursing rates for medication administration is way off the mark. In fact, the taxpayers will save over \$20 million annually if no further changes are made – much higher than the original projection when the legislature enacted the cut in February.

The commentary also misses the point of why it makes sense to invest in home care. Compliance with medications is absolutely essential to preventing flare-ups of psychiatric disorders. One unnecessary two-week trip to the hospital for a person with schizophrenia, at a \$1,000 a day, can cost more than a year’s worth of home care. Similarly, the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders has saved \$250 million since 1994. When home care is provided for more than 12 visits per month, it must be authorized in advance by the Department of Social Services, helping to ensure cost effectiveness.

Home care represents the best hope that we have for improving lives and saving money. During this challenging time, we hope that the public and state lawmakers are not swayed by myths and half-truths.

Sincerely,

Brian D. Ellsworth
President & CEO
CT Association for Home Care

(The Connecticut Association for Home Care represents 63 licensed home care agencies providing care and services to over 40,000 elderly and chronically ill Connecticut residents.)