



Friday, October 15, 2010

John R. Sauer  
Executive Director  
Wisconsin Association of Homes & Services for the Aging  
204 S. Hamilton St.  
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Mr. Sauer,

The most important component of Wisconsin's long-term care system are the residents and the men and women who provide the hands-on direct care to them. As a society we have a responsibility to maintain the best in quality care for our senior citizens and those persons who require long-term care services and that they receive that care in the most appropriate setting that ensures the highest quality of life standard.

However, I know that our long term care providers are facing an uncertain future filled with significant issues that are making it harder and harder for them to provide quality care for Wisconsin's most vulnerable citizens.

It is not difficult to see that the level of skimming from the Provider Assessment, or Bed Tax, no longer adheres to the original intent of this initiative, which was to provide rate increases to help cover the actual costs of providing quality care and improve direct caregiver wages.

Although every administration starting with Governor Tommy Thompson's has instituted a bed assessment, it is clear that the nursing home profession never agreed to the premise of "skimming."

Furthermore, the most recent 2009-2011 biennial budget roughly doubled the nursing home bed assessment with a promise that a portion of the funding would provide nursing homes with an annual two percent Medicaid rate increase. A rate increase for nursing homes - paid for by nursing homes. Unfortunately, it has come to my attention that the actual increase was much less than what was promised. This is unacceptable.

If elected, my administration's policy will be to ensure that the assessment and the federal matching revenues generated should be dedicated toward the original purpose and agreement with the profession it was intended – to allow our nursing homes to self-fund the quality care they provide to Wisconsin's frail and elderly, not to plug budget holes and balance the state's budget on the backs of long term care residents and providers.

Although the state faces significant budgetary challenges, state government should endeavor to preserve the integrity of dedicated fee and assessment agreements for which they were intended. I will work to see that this happens.

Ensuring quality care and quality of life for our state's most vulnerable individuals should always be our priority. I know it's long been the priority of your members, and I pledge to support them in making it a priority of my administration as well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Barrett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "T" and "B".

Tom Barrett