

October 20, 2009

Dear Committee,

The following is a summary of my testimony delivered to you this morning at the Thompson Center.

NUMBER ONE: Owners with bad track records must lose their Illinois license. There is no other enforcement scheme in the state of Illinois, to my knowledge, that provide so few and such limited sanctions for such blatant disregard for the law. Even laws to protect animals are more meaningful than current state practices because their fines are mandatory.

What I see is something akin to Bart Simpson at the blackboard: Nursing homes receive citations, fines, loss of revenue, and then write meaningless plans of correction. When caught by the Chicago Tribune or ILDPH, nursing homes dutifully pay their fines and write letters of correction saying that starting right now, they really will provide quality care, they really will prevent that murder, or suicide, or rape. But residents continue to suffer.

Please understand that even mandatory fines in the tens of thousands of dollars will not be more than a small cost of business for nursing homes in our community that gross tens of millions of dollars every year. Licenses need to be taken away from nursing home owners with track records of neglecting residents.

NUMBER TWO: Funding DHS community care is the cost conscious solution. The strategy is to provide community mental health, using highly trained specialists such as Assertive Community Treatment Teams, empowered to assess and provide for the needs of individuals within the context of their community. Alderman Smith has a pilot program being implemented in Uptown and Edgewater implementing this strategy, and I am proud to report that the benefit to the individuals and the community are clearly positive. I have faith in DHS implementing national standards of best practices through funding community care.

Sincerely,

Monica Hammer, Esq.

Alderman Mary Ann Smith's Legislative Aid