



October 7, 2020

To Whom This May Concern,

I am a social worker in the Complex Care Center at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center where we serve as the primary care home for children with complex chronic medical conditions. The patients we care for in the Complex Care Center have multiple diagnoses and frequently are technology dependent, needing home ventilation or tube feedings for daily functioning and quality of life. Cincinnati Children's is ranked #3 in the nation among Honor Roll hospitals in the *U.S. News and World Report 2020-2021 Best Children's Hospitals*.

Due to the specialty and excellent care provided at Cincinnati Children's Hospital, we are the medical home to many patients suffering from rare genetic disorders and often come to our clinic already receiving hospice services. One of the most frustrating things about my job is the lack of home nursing available to progress patients towards safe discharge and the ultimate goal of thriving in their own homes surrounded by loving family. Along with my team members, I have worked countless hours making numerous referrals to home health agencies as our patients with tracheostomies and who are ventilator dependent cannot be discharged from the hospital without at least 7 nights of nursing covered. Many of these patients are approved for 112-168 hours of nursing weekly and we have difficulty covering the bare minimum requirement of 56 hours to discharge them home safely. Patients who are trached and vented must have an awake person with them at all times due to risk of plugging that can ultimately lead to their death instantaneously. These patients are at risk and must have their airway monitored at all times. I have watched patients have to remain admitted to the hospital for YEARS due to lack of availability of home health nurses to care for them in their home.

As a social worker certified in trauma response, it is important for me to communicate the importance of early intervention and children meeting developmental milestones. I can tell you with great certainty that the first 3 years of a child's life are extremely important as this is the time when the attachment process begins. While we cannot control the medical trauma that has already dominated their short lives, we can do better in getting them home sooner as to not further jeopardize their opportunity to form healthy attachments to their parents. When a child forms healthy attachments before the age of 3 years, this shapes their brain to be able to feel a sense of safety and regulation as they develop. When healthy attachments with parents are not formed, this leads to many mental health problems and attachment disorders that can be lifelong and difficult to reverse.

In conclusion, I ask you to please strongly consider the brief information I have provided in this letter. I hope that you will be able to see how important the home health nursing profession is to our most vulnerable patient's at the most vulnerable time in their lives. I beg you to find a way to support making this position more desired and a priority to improve so we can discharge our young patients safely and appropriately to their loving homes as this time in their lives is

extremely valuable. While the hospital can keep these patients safe for the years they are admitted due to lack of home nursing, I assure you that it is in the best interest of the child to be discharged home with their families as soon as possible.

If you have any questions or need any further information, I urge you to please contact me at any of the methods mentioned below. I would be more than happy to speak with you!

Sincerely,

Amelia M. Auberger, MSW-LISW-S

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