

January 14, 3004

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

Thank you for hearing me today. I have never in my life been a politically active person but I feel compelled to speak on behalf of my father and my aunt (both of whom asked me to take power of attorney and speak for them). I've been active in this role for eight years for my aunt and six years for my father. Both are in a nursing home in Burlington, NC and can no longer look after or speak for themselves. Neither of them have a great deal of money and I've tried very, very hard to stretch their dollars to pay for their needs and to pay their expenses, which are HUGE in comparison to their estate.

It appears to me that Robin Hood is alive and well in NC when I hear about the "Medicaid Assessment Program for Skilled Facilities", which can be found in Section 10.28 of House Bill 397. I realize that this is a very large document and that it would take a great deal of time for everyone to read every word, but this section affects a growing population of our society who have been very productive in their past and tried to prepare for their so called golden years. Neither of them made lots of money. My dad had the good sense to buy long-term insurance, which is good for two years, and my aunt, who was a schoolteacher, just looked after her money (that is called a balanced budget). Neither of them bought expensive cars every few years or took grand vacations. They didn't go to the movies or out to eat frequently, but stayed home and tended a garden so there were lots of fresh vegetables to can and freeze for the coming winter. Maybe they should have lived a little more on the wild side considering the fact that the state of NC is trying to take part of their assets to balance the state budget. If I sound a bit upset you can bet I am. I think we need to look closely at this bit of legislation and start looking elsewhere to balance the budget. At the present time I'm being charged an extra \$8.25 dollars a day for this assessment. That equates to \$3011.25 per year. Eight dollars and 25 cents a month would be outrageous but \$8.25 per day is a crime. I look at all of their bills when I receive them and I was curious when I saw an increase of \$10 per day. I asked why and was told about the assessment. I understand that there are lots of people in nursing homes that can't pay for their own care for lots of reasons. Maybe they never made lots of money; maybe they didn't know how to manage money or maybe they have asset preservation. I also know that there are no free lunches and someone has to pay for these people. I realize some of the population will take a handout when they can get it and are always looking for ways to get more. Seeing how the government is looking for ways to give money away we can't really hold "John Q Public" at fault. Whatever the reason I don't feel it fair to take from those who tried hard to save for their future. I also understand that nursing homes are in business to make money and I'm glad they provide this service for people like my relatives who can no longer stay at home; but on the other hand I don't feel responsible for all the profit of the nursing home either.

I asked one of my representatives when the law regarding asset preservation was going to be changed and was told that it had been tried but didn't pass. I feel this is just one way to keep some people off Medicaid a little longer.

With all the Medicaid programs in the state (and they seem to be growing) I am very concerned that my children and grandchildren will forever be paying for all these bills in taxes. In my opinion we need to be concerned more about bringing good paying jobs to the state instead of adding more taxes on the few who do have jobs. More work brings in more tax money.

Being a conservative person I have always paid my bills on time and I keep a balanced budget, but now I feel the need to spend, spend and spend some more (except I feel sorry for future generations who would have to pay for my upkeep).

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