

State orders Courtland Gardens to remain open

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STAMFORD -- The state Department of [Social Services](#) rejected a Kentucky-based company's request to shut down the [Courtland Gardens Healthcare Center](#) Thursday, allowing 113 remaining residents to stay at the home for now.

In the decision, the agency said that [Kindred Healthcare Inc.](#) hadn't sought an increased Medicaid reimbursement labor concessions or made other proactive moves to rein in costs running the 162-bed facility that would make it profitable or easier to sell.

The closure would also result in crowding nearby nursing facilities and diminish the overall quality of skilled nursing in the city and surrounding towns, the decision said.

"Low bed availability with the closure of Courtland Gardens could be exacerbated with future increased demand associated with an increase in the number of individuals over age 65 in Fairfield County," the decision said.

Last month, Kindred filed an application to shut down the home, citing the difficulty finding a buyer for the home and continued annual losses of \$3.7 million in 2008 and \$3.9 million in 2009.

"A denial of Kindred's request to close Courtland Gardens may directly result in continued financial losses if cost savings or revenue increases are not achieved," the decision read.

The decision comes as other city nursing homes are also facing troubles. Last month, the state ordered St. [Camillus Healthcare Center](#) to correct deficiencies of care or close and this week, unionized workers at the [William & Sally Tandet Healthcare Center](#) complained about bouncing paychecks and losing their health insurance.

Kevin Prisco, executive director for Kindred's Connecticut nursing homes said in a statement that the company will proceed with an appeal, and blamed the state's low Medicaid reimbursement rates making it impossible to keep the home solvent.

The current Medicaid reimbursement rate for Courtland Gardens is \$233 a day for each resident.

The home will continue to refuse new admissions as it seeks to reverse the decision, Prisco said, and will soon begin laying workers off because of the diminished number of residents.

"Today's decision to deny our application to close Courtland Gardens is unfortunate and regrettable," Prisco said. "This situation is a direct result of the chronic underfunding of Medicaid in the state of Connecticut and we will be appealing the decision."

State Sen. [Andrew McDonald](#), D-Stamford and State Rep. [Carlo Leone](#), D-Stamford, who both testified against the request at a public hearing last month said the decision was well-considered and a victory for longtime residents of the home who had asked the state to fully consider the complex fallout the closure would cause.

Last month at a public hearing more than 35 people, including Courtland residents, their relatives, doctors, and social service professionals in the area testified on the potential closure, reflecting the importance of the facility, the decision said.

"This is an extraordinary win for the residents of Courtland Gardens and the entire city of Stamford," McDonald said. "It will help stabilize our nursing home options in the city and will send a strong message to out-of-state corporations that they can't manipulate the lives of people in our community without fighting back."

Leone said that the decision affirmed the outpouring of support from the residents and others at the hearing against the closure.

"I am very happy to have stood united alongside my constituents as we successfully made our voices heard," Leone said.

Marie Allen, executive director for the [Southwestern Connecticut Agency on Aging](#) said the closure of the home would cause special difficulty for the families of Alzheimer's Disease sufferers because the facility operates one of the only fully guarded wards for patients with that disease.

Allen said she was troubled by Kindred's decision to continue to refuse new admissions, which indicates the company is committed to closing the home.

"This is a temporary reprieve for patients to have a little bit more time to consider alternatives but if the company is not accepting new admissions it means they will probably close," Allen said.

In January, the [Connecticut Association of Healthcare Facilities](#) sued the state in U.S. District Court claiming the state's Medicaid reimbursement formulas for in-state nursing homes was unlawful because it ignored federal criteria that required it to calculate payments based on the quality of

care, after state budget cuts to Medicaid payments of \$300 million over two years.

The suit claims the lower payment levels are eroding the quality of care.

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