

Torrington Register Citizen
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Letter To the Editor:

As a member of the Connecticut Commission on Aging and Director of the Sullivan Senior Center in Torrington, I find the Governor's proposal this week to eliminate the Commission on Aging as part of her budget-cutting exercise extremely short-sighted.

The recommendation is especially troubling in these difficult economic times. The Commission's nonpartisan, world-class research work alone provides concrete ways to plan for a brighter future for Connecticut, including saving the State hundreds of millions of dollars annually by rebalancing the long-term care system in our State.

Taxpayers would be ill-served by eliminating an agency that actually saves them money while working simultaneously to improve the quality of their lives. In both these regards, the Commission's record of achievement and leadership as an independent agency of the State Legislature is unparalleled.

The Commission fills a unique role within the State. Its functions are not duplicated anywhere within state government.

Connecticut has one of the highest populations of older adults in the nation and that population is soaring. In addition to the one million baby boomers, 600,000 people are 60 years of age or older and by 2040, the number of people 85 and older will increase threefold. Clearly, the Commission's role in helping Connecticut prepare for this unprecedented demographic explosion has never been more critical.

The Commission has been instrumental in helping tens of thousands of older adults and persons with disabilities lead better lives through its leadership in long-term care initiatives, ConnPACE, the Money Follows the Person program, nutrition, transportation and many others.

It's worth noting that the Commission is citizen-driven, supported by a small but highly effective and efficient professional staff. Its 17 unpaid Commission members come from communities throughout the state. The extremely small budget for its State Capitol-based four-person staff—hardly a blip on the radar screen in view of the state's overall \$18 billion budget—delivers a sound and wise investment in Connecticut's future.

The Connecticut Commission on Aging has provided the State with invaluable expertise since 1993—it has created a road map for the future—and the General Assembly must ensure that it is allowed to continue its critical work on behalf of the older adults living in our State.

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