



*Advocating for Older Adults of Today and Tomorrow*

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Testimony of

Julia Evans Starr, Executive Director  
Connecticut Commission on Aging

On

*SB 499: An Act Concerning Parking for Persons with Disabilities*

Transportation Committee

March 5, 2008

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important initiative. As you may know, the Commission on Aging is the independent state agency solely devoted to enhancing the lives of the present and future generations of our state's older adults. I also co-chair the Long-Term Care Advisory Council (LTCAC) with Representative Peter Villano. The LTCAC is a remarkable collaboration of consumers, providers, and advocates for older adults and persons of all ages with disabilities.

The Commission on Aging supports *SB 499, An Act Concerning Parking for Persons with Disabilities*. This initiative will strengthen both the process by which individuals receive handicapped parking permits and enforcement of their usage.

Ability to travel outside the home is a critical part of remaining active in one's community and living a high quality life. As this Committee knows too well, although Dial-a-Ride and public transportation are sometimes available, these services are not comprehensive enough for most individuals in our state. Many individuals with disabilities—many of whom are older adults—are able to drive to their own workplaces, medical appointments, religious services, errands, and the like. Many others are able to ride with friends. The state of Connecticut currently has a system in place for issuing removable windshield placards that allow persons with disabilities, as well as individuals who are driving them, to park in handicapped parking spots. However, too often, the few parking spots that are set aside for those with disabilities are used by those who do not need them. We have all seen this complete disregard for persons with disabilities in our local parking lots.

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By including identifying information on the placard, law enforcement will have additional tools to track usage. Additionally, this bill seeks to eliminate the “lifetime permits” that have been available in Connecticut for the last several years, replacing them with renewable permits instead. Many individuals have temporary disabilities, such as a broken leg, and are able to continue using their permit long after they need to do so—leaving fewer spaces available for those in real need. Moreover, renewable permits will provide the state with more accurate information on this population.

It is my understanding that some of the language in this bill needs to be adjusted to ensure that individuals who have state-issued identity cards are included, along with those who have operators’ licenses. I urge this Committee to move forward with those changes and report favorably on this worthy initiative. This is a commonsense proposal that will make a real difference in the quality of lives of persons in our state with disabilities.

Thank you.