



Feb. 8, 2007

**Testimony of Stephen Shapiro, AARP Connecticut volunteer
on
S.B. 54, S.B. 382, S.B. 384, H.B. 5658, H.B. 5663 and H.B. 6277
before the
Human Services Committee**

Chairman Harris, Chairman Villano, and members of the committee, I'm Stephen Shapiro, the leading long-term care volunteer for AARP Connecticut.

I represent the 611,000 members of AARP in the state. Nationwide, we have 38 million members, who range in age from 50 to over 100.

AARP believes we need to reform our health care system in several ways, including the system that now almost automatically institutionalizes someone who needs long-term care under Medicaid.

We believe there is a better, and perhaps less expensive way, under Medicaid to care for people who now are in long-term care facilities, for those at risk of moving into long-term care facilities and for the people who are now retiring and will be demanding a more flexible system, one in which they may receive care at home for as long as possible.

Baby Boomers are turning 50 at a rate of 7.6 every second and turning 60 at a rate of something like 330 every hour. We can't help growing older but we can help *how* we grow older and what society will be like *as* we grow older.

And that is why AARP is here to support S.B. 54, an act concerning increased access to home-based long-term care; S.B. 384 and its companion, H.B. 5663, both acts to increase funding for the home care program for the elderly; and H.B. 5658, an act increasing funding for home care alternatives.

We also are here to express our support for S.B. 382 and H.R. 6277, both acts to increase funding for the elderly nutrition programs. We support expansion of the senior nutrition program to the point where the state replaces lost federal dollars.

Rather than go point-by-point on each home-care bill AARP supports, I will address our concerns in general. **First of all, let me stress that the reform of our state's long-term care system is the No. 1 priority for AARP Connecticut in this legislative session.**

AARP believes that it is time for Medicaid to provide seniors access to more health care options such as 24-hour home care.

It is also time for Medicaid to stop limiting home care services to patients of only a certain age and/or a particular disease.

The bills we support today could help make this happen.

We also advocate for a rebalancing of Medicaid dollars. Shift more money to home care and away from institutional care. On average, it costs Medicaid half as much to provide care for someone at home than it costs to provide institutional care.

AARP believes that the Money Follows the Person program that the Department of Social Services will implement on July 1, is a great first step toward long-term care reform in the state. The federal grant will provide Medicaid funds to help people move from institutional long-term care to care in their home, the home of a relative or an assisted-living type residence. It will allow Medicaid to provide 24-hour in-home care. It will help pay for ramps and medical equipment necessary to live at home.

But the grant provides for 700 people and requires that they are in a nursing home to be able to receive this expanded Medicaid care at home.

AARP would like to take this a step further. The legislature and the state should put together whatever is necessary – in terms of Medicaid waivers, state plan amendments, and other measures - to make it possible for someone *at risk* of going into a nursing home to receive the same services as someone who was in a nursing home but left under the Money Follows the Person program.

A person shouldn't have to be institutionalized just to receive better home care under Medicaid.

AARP believes Americans should have choice when it comes to long-term care – allowing them to maintain their independence at home or in their communities with expanded and affordable financing options.

Nationally, AARP also is focusing on health care reform, including long-term care, as well as financial security, in a campaign called Divided We Fail. We have some major national partners who have joined us and we are expecting more.

We believe that health care costs are a major concern today for adults and their families and that those costs should not burden future generations. We will be working statewide and nationally to talk to our elected leaders about their health care policies.

We congratulate the state on taking the crucial step toward applying for and receiving the federal funds for Money Follows the Person. And we are encouraged by the home-care bills before you today.

We look forward to working with you in a bi-partisan approach to implementing programs that expand home care under Medicaid for all low-income residents of Connecticut who need long-term care.