



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

### TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH March 14, 2007

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#### **Senate Bill 1226 - An Act Establishing a Fall Prevention Program**

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The Department of Public Health provides the following information with regard to Senate Bill 1226.

Falls are a significant public health issue for older adults in Connecticut. Fall-related injuries are a major cause of health care utilization and the leading cause of preventable nursing home placement. Falls are the leading cause of injury related hospitalization in Connecticut, with 67% of the fall hospitalizations occurring among older adults. Between 2000 and 2004 there were 28,816 inpatient hospitalizations attributable to falls among person 65 years and older. Fall related inpatient hospital charges were approximately \$100 million per year during this time period. These charges do not include physician fees or costs of long-term care.

Approximately one third of older adults in the United States fall every year. Of the persons who fall, 20% to 30% suffer moderate to severe injuries, such as fractures or head injuries. Over 90% of all hip fractures are due to falls and many of these persons are never able to return to their pre fracture lifestyle or level of mobility. As many as 25% of hip fracture patients require at least one year of nursing home care. There were 3,228 hospitalizations due to hip fractures among Connecticut residents age 65 and over during 2004. Falls are also the leading cause of traumatic brain injury (TBI) related death and hospitalization in Connecticut. Residents age 65 years and older account for approximately one third of the total TBI hospitalizations. Even if they do not cause physical injury, falls can have significant consequences. Many people who fall develop a fear of falling that causes them to limit their activities which in turn leads to decreased mobility and fitness and increased fall risk.

Falls and fall related injuries are preventable. Many of the factors that increase a person's risk of falling have been identified. There is a significant body of research, including research conducted in Connecticut, which has demonstrated that clinical assessment and multifaceted intervention programs can reduce the risk of falling and related injuries. A comprehensive statewide fall prevention program can not only help prevent deaths, disabilities, and premature nursing home admissions but also allow Connecticut's older residents to lead more active and independent lives.

Additional funding would be required to carry out the activities associated with implementing a new fall prevention program. Currently, the funding for this initiative is not included in the Governor's recommended budget.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's views on this bill.

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