



**Testimony
Public Hearing
Human Services Committee
Melissa Marshall, Executive Director
Advocacy Unlimited
February 27, 2007**

Good morning, Senator Harris, Representative Villano and members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Melissa Marshall. I am the Executive Director of Advocacy Unlimited (AU). AU is a non-profit, consumer controlled organization that empowers people with psychiatric disabilities through education in self, systems and legislative advocacy. I am here today to testify in favor of **Committee Bill 117 AAC MEDICAID ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATIONS FOR PERSONS WHO ARE MEDICALLY NEEDY** and **Proposed Bill 5640 AAC INCREASED ACCESS TO THE MEDICAID PROGRAM FOR THE MEDICALLY NEEDY**.

Each of these bills will raise the medically needy income limit for seniors and people with disabilities. Presently, Medicaid is available to persons with an income of \$476.19 per month. People on SSI and SSDI have approximately \$200. Of their income disregarded- it is not counted in determining if they meet this limit. Low income individuals who do not meet this limit are allowed to "spend down" to the income limits by tracking qualified medical and other bills that they have incurred.

People engaging in spend down face numerous difficulties. Primarily, the income limit is too low. The eligibility limit has not been altered since 1990. It is well below the level of poverty, whereas the limit for HUSKY recipients is 150% of the poverty level.

Because Medicare Part D is funded with federal dollars, recipients may no longer count prescription drugs toward spend down. Previously, ConnPACE recipients could count bills paid by ConnPACE toward meeting the spend down.

As a result, many low income elders and people with disabilities take much longer to get on Medicaid and it prohibits some from getting on at all.

Passage of this legislation will help thousands of Connecticut seniors and people with disabilities. We urge you to raise the income limit for medically needy individuals.