



CONNECTICUT CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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Testimony Before the Human Services Committee
On H.B. 7279 - An Act Concerning The Administration Of The Money Follows
The Person Program
By
Deacon David Reynolds
March 8, 2007

The Connecticut Catholic Conference, which represents the Catholic Bishops of Connecticut, urges you to support H.B. 7279, "An Act Concerning the Administration Of The Money Follows The Person Program." This bill allows the Department of Social Services to expand the number of demonstration slots for this extremely worthwhile program from 100 to 700 patients. This program helps to keep families together and allows them the option of home care over permanent institutionalization for critically ill or disabled loved ones.

The program is financially beneficial to the State. The first year a person moves out of the institutional setting the federal government will cover a higher percent (75% vs. 50%) of the cost of their services under Medicaid and states will pay a smaller portion. After the first year of service, the match rate will return to the regular Medicaid federal-state match rate. However, even this can save the state money due to the lower cost of providing community-based care instead of institutional care. The Connecticut Department of Social Services stated at a hearing in October 2006 that they believe it may be twice as expensive to institutionalize a person then to provide home care. The exact savings to the State will be revealed as this demonstration project progresses.

However, the financial aspects of this program are not the primary reason it has the support of the Catholic Conference. The Catholic Church has long been involved in numerous aspects of health care in our state and nation. Throughout this history of involvement it has always directed Catholic institutions to provide quality, compassionate care to all its patients in a way that respects their human dignity. Long-term institutionalization of the disabled and older adults, although

in most cases a necessity, is viewed by many as a dehumanizing act. Many patients feel isolated and abandoned by their loved ones. These types of feelings, real or perceived, can be detrimental to the health of the patient. The institutionalization of a loved one can also put a strain on family members as they attempt to find visitation time, deal with care issues at the institution and cope with their own feelings of discomfort in placing a loved one in a long-term care facility.

The Money Follows the Person program allows quality health care to continue, and additionally relieves many of the feelings of abandonment and frustration that both the patient and family members encounter. It allows patients to remain in an environment that provide them the security of familiarity and family love. This program is not for everyone; many patients cannot be moved home or families are just not able to support them in the home environment. However, it offers great hope and benefits to those patients and families that can take advantage of the program.

The future demands placed on the long-term care facilities in our state will continue to increase as a large portion of our population ages. Creative programs like Money Follows The Person should be encouraged by our State government at every opportunity. This bill adds 600 slots to the already available 100 slots. Hopefully, in the future the State of Connecticut will allow all citizens that want to take advantage of this program to do so by removing this limit. The Conference urges this committee to pass H.B. 7279 and closely monitor this program in the future so it can be enhanced and expanded for the benefit of thousands of Connecticut's patients and families.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Reynolds". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "R".