



Connecticut Association of Area Agencies on Aging, Inc.

Testimony – Human Services Committee 3/6/07

Kate McEvoy, Deputy Director
Agency on Aging of South Central CT, (203) 785-8533

Position

- **Senate Bill 1273 – An Act Concerning Respite Care Services for Caretakers of Persons with Alzheimer’s Disease.**

The Connecticut Area Agencies on Aging administer the Statewide Respite Program, which is the subject of this bill, on a regional basis. Based on the increasing incidence of individuals who are diagnosed with dementia, C4A supports increased overall funding for this program, as is provided for in Section 2.

Unless substantial additional funding is appropriated, however, C4A does not support Section 1 of this bill, which proposes to increase the maximum grant for services under the program from \$3,500 to \$7,500. Increasing the maximum grant without substantially increasing the overall appropriation will have the effect of limiting the number of families that can be served by the program.

Background on the Statewide Respite Program

The Connecticut Statewide Respite Program, which is administered on a regional basis by the Connecticut Area Agencies on Aging, and operated in collaboration with the Department of Social Services and the Connecticut Alzheimer’s Association, has proved that it is a vital and cost-effective source of support for caregivers of individuals afflicted with Alzheimer’s disease or other dementia.

Need for the program is well substantiated. As families continue to become aware of this program, participation has swelled. Between July 1, 2005 and June 30, 2006, the program served over 700 clients with skilled care management intervention. This includes in-home assessment, assistance in identifying needed supports, and ongoing referral to other sources of assistance including the Connecticut Home Care Program for the Elderly. During that period, 556 clients

also benefited from payment for purchased services including adult day care, home health aide assistance, and companion/ homemaker support, among others. Most utilized services included adult day care (used by 49% of clients), companion/homemaker (used by 34% of clients), and home health aide (used by 22% of clients).

These services enabled family caregivers to safeguard their own physical health and mental well being by taking the time to visit the doctor, go shopping, maintain connections with friends and family, and rest and renew for the ongoing challenge of caring for loved ones with dementia. Data from this period is, however, but an initial indicator of overall need for assistance. Given that there are over 100,000 individuals in Connecticut with diagnoses of dementia, many more can be expected to seek the program's assistance.

The program's cost-effectiveness is also readily proven. This program was targeted to help middle-income families who have not traditionally qualified for state assistance with home care services. The financial assistance that is provided in paying for services is a meaningful investment in making sure that these caregivers can continue to provide care at home, thereby deferring and in some cases entirely obviating the need for state expenditure on nursing facility care.