



Connecticut Association of Area Agencies on Aging, Inc.

Testimony – Public Health Committee 3/14/07

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

Positions

➤ **Senate Bill 1226 An Act Establishing a Fall Prevention Program**

C4A **supports** Senate Bill 1226, which seeks to require the Department of Public Health (DPH) to:

- promote and support fall prevention research;
- establish, with the Department of Social Services (DSS), a professional education program;
- oversee research and demonstration projects; and
- convene a working group to study and make recommendations on reducing health care costs associated with falls.

Existing Connecticut home and community-based care options for older individuals and those with disabilities, such as nutrition assistance, prescription drug coverage, and the Medicaid waivers, yield substantial cost savings in State expenditures on long-term care by forestalling the need for costly nursing home placement. Such supports also meaningfully fulfill consumers' preference to remain independent and to make autonomous choices about living environment and the mode by which services are provided. Through these services, an individual can 1) preserve the right to live as s/he chooses; 2) assist to the extent of ability in planning the course of his/her care; 3) retain immediate contact with loved ones; and 4) safeguard both health and dignity.

Fall prevention initiatives are a critical complement to these efforts. Especially among older adults, falls are the cause of a high incidence of hospitalizations (on average, 12,000 per year in Connecticut), and have a dramatic impact on mobility, overall physical function and even life expectancy.

Fall prevention initiatives anticipate potential risks associated with common chronic conditions, identify and implement appropriate interventions (e.g. home modifications, better management of prescription drugs), and track success in preventing need for acute and/or long-term nursing home care.

Such programs are endorsed by the Connecticut Long-Term Care Plan, which recommends as a focus area:

Establish[ment of] a working Fall Prevention partnership between the Department of Social Services (DSS) Elderly Services Division and the Department of Public Health (DPH) to expand current DPH fall prevention projects (e.g. home safety assessments, fall prevention seminars, medication safety programs, and fall prevention exercise classes) to serve new populations and geographic areas.

Strengthening and coordinating existing efforts among DPH and its academic and community partners will permit data-driven analysis of best practices and guidance on replication that will effectively serve the State's interests.