



**Testimony of Kelly Kulesa  
In Support of H.B. 5791 and S.B. 561  
Human Services Committee  
March 4, 2008**

Senator Harris, Representative Villano, and members of the Human Services committee, my name is Kelly Kulesa, and I live in New Haven. I am speaking today as a volunteer for AARP CT. I am testifying in support of H.B. 5791, "An Act Concerning A Single Point of Entry For Long Term Care" and S.B. 561, "An Act Concerning the Money Follows the Person Project and Establishment of a Long Term Care Trust Fund."

I have become a nursing facility resident twice in my life. It was never for medical reasons, but simply because housing, Personal Care Assistance and case management services fell through. Each time, it took from a year to a year and a half to re-establish these essential services.

On April 29, 2002, at 11:00 a.m. I was discharged from a nursing facility, for the last time. Since then, I have held a job as an administrative assistant at Fellowship Place, I have volunteered with the Nursing Facility Transition Project and Money Follows the Person Steering Committees, and as I mentioned above, I am volunteering for AARP.

The Single Point of Entry system would be an invaluable resource. T.F. is severely disabled and requires constant nursing care in order to stay out of a nursing facility, and his current agency is not meeting all of his needs. If Single Point of Entry were currently available, T.F.'s mother would easily be able to search for another agency to better meet her son's needs, which she is currently unable to do, both because of lack of knowledge of the current system, and lack of time to do the amount of work needed to find another agency because she expends so much of her time and energy to meet her son's needs, in order to keep him out of a nursing facility.

While I have only mentioned one case as an example of how Single Point of Entry would be essential, this is by no means an isolated case. There are easily hundreds of similar cases statewide, of all ages and income levels, who could benefit from Single Point of Entry.

I'm also here today to support SB 561. While it may seem unrealistic to expand the Money Follows the Person Project from 700 to 5000, both state and federal law states that if you are able to live in the community with the proper supports, you have the right to do so, and in the majority of cases, it is cheaper to have the person live in the community than in the nursing facility. There is also a very emotional component to this

bill, and that is the wait that nursing facility residents must endure during discharge planning in order to get into the community.

Because I needed assistance from more than one system, that is, case management and mental health support from DMHAS, as well as personal care assistance, which is traditionally handled by the Department of Social Services, it took over a year to develop my care plan, simply because of the current bureaucratic system, and the fact that those two agencies do not traditionally work together.

I was fortunate that my parents advocated to have a program created that allowed me to leave the nursing facility. There are many people in nursing facilities who do not even know that it is possible for them to leave. I believe from the bottom of my heart that they should be informed that they have the right to leave, and that we need a system that makes this possible in the most supportive, yet quickest possible way. That is why I also support the creation of a Long Term Care Trust Fund, so that every cent of the monies intended to support the Money Follows the Person Project, including any Medicaid savings be used to develop a Long Term Care system in Connecticut where people have the option to choose and receive Long Term Care services in the least restrictive appropriate environment.

Because I got that option, I am able to be here today to tell you how very important that is.

Lastly, I would like to thank you very much for your time.