

Gerald Longworth
115 Kings Way
Windsor, CT 06095-3570
(860) 293-1850
glongworth@sbcglobal.net

**February 28, 2008
Human Services Committee Public Hearing**

Testimony in Support of Raised S.B. No. 414, An Act Concerning the State-funded Home Care Program for the Disabled and Personal Care Assistance Program for the Disabled.

“Expanding the Connecticut Home Care Program for the Disabled Pilot”

Senator Harris, Representative Villano and Distinguished Members of the Human Services Committee,

My name is Gerald Longworth. I am a resident of Windsor and I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in 1970. Since 2007, I have served on the Government Relations Committee of the Connecticut Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society and I have volunteered with the Society in various capacities during the past several years.

I am here today to thank the Human Services Committee, Governor Rell and the General Assembly for including the \$720,000 that is in the Governor's budget for the Connecticut Home Care Program for the Disabled Pilot.

I am asking that you please pass SB 414, AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE-FUNDED HOME CARE PROGRAM FOR THE DISABLED AND PERSONAL CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR THE DISABLED. This legislation will:

- ⇒ **Increase the funding for the Connecticut Home Care Program for the Disabled Pilot by \$280,000 for a total of \$1,000,000 so the program can serve approximately 20 more people in the next fiscal year.**
- ⇒ **Amend the legislation so that the allowed asset amounts will always match the State Funded Portion of the Connecticut Program for Elders.**
 - As of January 2008 asset limits under the elder program for an individual are \$31,320 and for a couple are \$41,760. However, the January 2008 asset limits under the disabled pilot program for an individual are \$20,328 and for a couple are \$30,492.

I wish to thank members of the legislature and the CT Department of Social Services and their Alternate Care Unit for their work to develop and implement the program which had its inception on October 1, 2007. Individuals between the age of 18-64 with degenerative neurological conditions, who are not eligible for other programs but need case management and other supportive services can benefit from this program. Currently, this program is serving individuals with Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, early onset Alzheimer's disease and a few individuals with very rare disorders.

As an individual living with MS and who has a sibling living with early onset Alzheimer's, I strongly concur with the position of the National MS Society that people with disabilities should have access to long-term care that is designed to help them live as independently as possible.

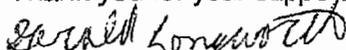
My sister was diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's disease about six years ago. She resides at home with her husband, who is her primary caregiver. Prior to my sister's diagnosis with Alzheimer's she served as a director of Religious Education for her parish and did extensive traveling nationally presenting seminars and training. Now, as her disease progresses she spends more time sleeping, has significant incontinence problems, particularly at night and because of her cognitive deficits she is unable to perform many activities of daily living without assistance of her husband. If my sister were able to attend an adult day center like what can be provided through the CT Home Care Program for the Disabled, I am sure it would benefit her functioning as well as serve as respite for her husband.

I was entering my senior year in college when I was diagnosed with MS. The course of my illness was fairly mild for several years during which I would have occasional exacerbations and extensive periods of remission. I worked fulltime for the State of Connecticut for 24 years, primarily in Human Resources. As my disease progressed, symptoms such as fatigue, spasticity, neurological pain, weakness and some cognitive deficits made work more difficult, particularly during the last few years of my employment. I began disability retirement in 1998. Since my retirement, I have tried to remain as active as possible, performing a wide array of volunteer activity.

Although I am currently able to perform the activities of daily living without assistance, I can see a significant progression in my illness since my retirement. My spasticity has worsened, my mobility has lessened and bladder and bowel management are more difficult. In January of this year, I learned that I have moderate disc protrusion of my lumbar spine. For over a week, sitting, toileting or simply trying to stand from a seated position was extremely difficult and painful. While medication and physical therapy have significantly relieved these symptoms, it gave me a real appreciation of the difficulty that I will face if my MS worsens. The range of services that the CT Home Care Program for the Disabled provides could help me to maintain my independence and ability to live in my own home rather than having to enter a long term care facility.

Please support the expansion of the Connecticut Home Care Program for the Disabled by increasing the funding by \$280,000 for a total of \$1,000,000 so the program can serve approximately 20 more people in the next fiscal year. I am also asking to amend the legislation so that the allowed asset amounts will always match the State Funded Portion of the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders.

Thank you for your support.


Gerald Longworth