



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

LONG TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM
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Human Services Committee

PUBLIC HEARING

Tuesday, March 4, 2008

Good morning Senator Harris, Representative Villano and honorable members of this committee. I appreciate the opportunity to comment on many of the proposed bills you have before you today. It is my honor to represent the residents of Connecticut's skilled nursing facilities, residential care homes, and assisted living/managed residential communities. Many of the bills you are considering today are either directly related to residents who reside in long term care facilities, to residents who reside in their communities, but require continued or increased supports to maintain their most independent lifestyle choices, or to individuals in the larger community of individuals with disabilities. It is my privilege to join with my colleagues on the Long Term Care Advisory Council and stand before you as a group united to support the whole community of aging and disability needs.

Many of the initiatives before you directly support the philosophy adopted by our state in 2005:

"Such policy and plan shall provide that individuals with long-term care needs have the option to choose and receive long-term care and support in the least restrictive, appropriate setting."

Furthermore, many of these bills directly support the findings and recommendations of the Connecticut Long-Term Care Needs Assessment. Connecticut residents want an infrastructure which supports independence and choice.

I wish to testify in support of the following proposed bills. And I ask that you give your thoughtful consideration to enacting them into legislation for the benefit of all Connecticut residents.

S.B. No. 557 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING A DEDUCTION ON THE PERSONAL INCOME TAX FOR PREMIUMS PAID FOR LONG-TERM CARE INSURANCE.

S.B. No. 558 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF HOSPICE SERVICES UNDER THE MEDICAID PROGRAM.

The concept of choice in our care is further fulfilled when Hospice services are available under the Medicaid program. Individuals and families facing end of life care decisions deserve to have care and treatment options available to them. These are such important decisions. Having the option to choose a Hospice Program to direct and manage care in the final days of life should be a choice available to everyone, including Medicaid recipients.

S.B. No. 559 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING A PILOT PROGRAM FOR SMALL HOUSE NURSING HOMES.

The Long Term Care Ombudsman Program is highly supportive of the efforts of health care providers to provide resident-centered care in a home setting. This bill is an initial step in that direction. Some states have already created small home nursing homes. We can probably learn much from their experiences. The Greenhouse Model is one model of a small home nursing home. There are long-term care professionals in Connecticut who have formed the Connecticut Culture Change Coalition and are doing a great deal of education around the concepts and philosophy of Culture Change. I ask the Legislature to include this group in the development of grant criteria for the proposed ten grants. Their knowledge and expertise regarding resident-centered care will be invaluable.

As I have stated at other times, I believe there are also many opportunities for our state to provide incentives to existing nursing homes to develop more resident-centered care. A small thing such as a night light rather than over-the-bed lighting would be a significant improvement for residents who must be awakened at night for medication or repositioning. Public address systems can be not only harsh and annoying but also confusing and distracting to residents and are not conducive to a home like setting. The legislature could incentivize these kinds of simple changes to the environment.

S.B. No. 561 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE MONEY FOLLOW THE PERSON PROJECT AND ESTABLISHMENT OF A LONG-TERM CARE TRUST FUND.

The Long Term Care Ombudsman Program applauds the proposal to provide for significantly higher numbers of individuals to be transitioned into and supported in community settings. The establishment of a Trust Fund to provide funds to finance long term care is insightful and makes good fiscal sense. I respectfully request this committee give serious consideration to these proposals.

S.B. No. 562 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING INCREASED ACCESS TO THE MEDICAID PROGRAM FOR THE MEDICALLY NEEDY ELDERLY AND DISABLED.

S.B. No. 563 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING EXPANSION OF ASSISTED LIVING SERVICES AND ADULT CARE OPTIONS.

Once again, we know from the Long Term Care Needs Assessment that overwhelmingly residents of Connecticut say they want to live in a least restrictive environment. As the natural progression of the aging process takes place, many individuals require some level of assistance with the so-called activities of daily living. In many instances an assisted living facility meets these needs, but is cost prohibitive. Some individuals, sadly, go into a nursing home because they do not have the financial resources to live in an assisted living facility.

S.B. No. 564 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS.

Access to good quality mental health care is a significant issue for long term care residents of Connecticut. Often times, the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program receives complaints from residents and/or their families related to problems which arise in their nursing home or residential care home due to unmet mental health needs. Providing better access to care for persons with psychiatric diagnoses will quite likely reduce or eliminate their needs for care and supervision such as that received in the long term care facility. Better psychiatric care and treatment for those who are living in these settings will improve their quality of life as well as the overall quality of life for all residents of the home.

S.B. No. 567 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONNECTICUT HOMECARE PROGRAM FOR THE ELDERLY.

H.B. No. 5791 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING A SINGLE POINT OF ENTRY FOR LONG-TERM CARE.

Consumer knowledge provides the foundation for choice and the ability to make informed decisions about care and services. It is essential as Connecticut affirms its commitment to a philosophy of choice and least restrictive setting that a state-wide single point of entry is established. The cumbersome and convoluted systems of the past do not support the needs for improved access to long term care information and services. A "single point of entry" system will provide this improved consumer-oriented delivery of information.

H.B. No. 5792 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE ASSET TEST USED TO DETERMINE ELIGIBILITY FOR THE STATE-ADMINISTERED GENERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

H.B. No. 5793 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING GRANTS FOR RESPITE CARE SERVICES FOR CARETAKERS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE.

Respite care services for caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer's disease is an understated need. The Long Term Care Ombudsman Program is highly supportive of this proposed bill to increase the maximum grant for respite for families of individuals with Alzheimer's disease. With all due respect, I hope that in the future the Legislature will consider providing funding to support and expand a respite program for individuals with other devastating diseases such as Multiple Sclerosis.

H.B. No. 5794 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES UNDER THE MEDICAID PROGRAM.

H.B. No. 5795 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF PODIATRY SERVICES UNDER THE MEDICAID PROGRAM.

H.B. No. 5796 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING ELIGIBILITY FOR THE FEDERAL SPECIFIED LOW-INCOME MEDICARE BENEFICIARY PROGRAM AND THE QUALIFYING INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM.

H.B. No. 5797 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF QUALIFIED INTERPRETER SERVICES.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to comment on the above proposed legislation. I know you have the best interests of Connecticut's residents in mind as you deliberate regarding these bills and the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program appreciates all your efforts.