

alzheimer's association™

Position Statement in support of Raised Bill #559-An Act Concerning a Pilot Program for Small House Nursing Homes

Testimony to the Human Services Committee March 4, 2008

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The Alzheimer's Association is a donor supported, non-profit organization serving the needs of families, health care professionals, and those individuals who are affected with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. The Association provides information and resources, support groups, education and training, and a 24 hours, 7 Day a week Helpline.

Currently in Connecticut, there are 68,000 individuals who are affected with Alzheimer's disease. The progressive nature of this disease affects cognitive, physical, and social abilities. Family caregivers often face many challenges trying to care for a loved one with this illness. As the disease progresses, many family members struggle with the decision to place a loved one in an institutional setting, which is usually done after all other options are exercised.

Placement in a facility for an individual with Alzheimer's disease can be disruptive and upsetting. Facilities attempt to ease the transition by paying special attention to the environment on the unit, and try to replicate the routine that the person had at home. Unfortunately, many of our long-term care facilities have larger units and an operational structure that makes this a challenge.

The small house, or Green House model originated in Mississippi about 5 years ago. Small community homes with 16 residents each have a central kitchen and common area, and staffing is decentralized to focus on the individual needs of the community. Residents in small houses have a higher quality of life than in the traditional nursing home model. A two year study by the University of Minnesota School of Public Health that compared the Tupelo Green Houses in Mississippi with two traditional nursing homes found that the quality of life was better in the Green Houses, with residents saying that they had more dignity, privacy, meaningful activity, relationships and autonomy. I have brought some supportive literature on this subject.

Residents who have Alzheimer's disease, which is estimated to be one out of two persons over the age of 85 would benefit tremendously from this pilot program. The opportunity to be cared for

in a small, peaceful community setting with familiar caregivers would improve the quality of life for our constituency, and I urge you to support this pilot program to increase the options for personalized and dignified dementia care for those residents who require a higher level of care.

I am happy to answer any questions and thank you for your time.