Raised Bill # 567

An Act Concerning the Connecticut Home Care Program for the Elderly

Testimony for the Human Services Committee
March 4, 2008
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Good morning Senator Harris, Representative Villano and members of the Human Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on RB #567 today.

I have testified before many of you in the past about my experiences as a family caregiver to my Grandparents, Tom and Irene, so I will just briefly illustrate how the provisions of this bill apply to an actual long term care situation.

In April of 2005, immediately following the sudden death of their son, my Grandparents, who had been mostly independent, both declined so dramatically that we were nearly forced to admit them to a nursing home. My Grandmother had mid-stage Alzheimer's and my Grandfather had been her primary caregiver. With his acute illness, they both needed 24 hour care.

This was, at it is for so many, the critical point in time. With the extraordinary efforts of our family and friends we were able to provide the necessary 24-hour care for several months until the home care program was approved. This was the hardest thing we have ever done.

With 168 hours in a week, we needed all the help we could get. When you are an exhausted, financially depleted caregiver, EVERY HOUR COUNTS.

We advocated for the PCA option and were able to obtain about 70 hours of combined "coverage" per week. The PCA option allowed us to stretch the plan of care to cover that many hours. Without the ability to use the PCA option, we would have had roughly half – only 35 hours per week – in services. This would have made home care IMPOSSIBLE.

While the program may not have been designed to provide 24-hour care – and it does not – **it is the only option for lower income families who are trying to piece together a plan of care at home.**

We were able to keep my Grandmother at home until her death in May of last year. My Grandfather remains there with his PCA plan of care. He is doing well and has now been able to remain in his community apartment for almost three years.

His plan of care costs approximately 2,400 per month. Compare that to the costs of a nursing home. Equally important is the fact that because of the quality one to one care he has received, his acute and chronic conditions have been well managed and costly hospitalizations have been avoided.

Lastly, as a professional care manager and taxpayer, it is troubling that if he had been in the same situation, but was only 63, he could not have accessed this program. Wouldn't it seem ironic if he had been forced into a nursing home because he was too young?

Please lend your active support to this bill and any others that provide for real access and practical flexibility in service delivery. PCA services benefit people of all ages and are a practical solution to high costs and rigid personnel regulations.

I'm happy to provide any further information or answer any questions you may have. Thank you.