



**Testimony of Maury Johnson, AARP Connecticut
On Sec. 16, S.B. 662
Human Services Committee
March 11, 2008**

Chairmen Harris, Villano, Ranking members Kissel and Gibbons and members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Maury Johnson and I am a volunteer for AARP Connecticut. With the support of our 39 million AARP members nationwide, including over 625,000 in Connecticut, AARP comes here today in support of the long term care pilot program described in Section 16 of S.B. 662.

Section 16 of S.B. 662 would provide 50 people with the same array of services available under Money Follows the Person, without having to first live in an institution for 6 months.

AARP believes that consumers shouldn't have to be institutionalized just to receive better home care under Medicaid. Yet, this is the ironic truth of our long term care system. The Money Follows the Person's demonstration project will require that someone first spend 6 months in a nursing facility before receiving home and community based long term care services. This requirement could actually incentivize people to move into nursing facilities so they can later qualify for Money Follows the Person.

AARP believes this undermines the spirit and intent of the Money Follows the Person project, as well as, the legal rights recognized by the *Olmstead* decision and the state of Connecticut in 2005—which says that someone should not have to receive services in a nursing facility when they can be appropriately served in the home and community.

Our ultimate goal is to create one set of services available to everyone qualifying for long-term care regardless of age or disease. Functional limitations should determine the level of support provided. There should be maximum consumer choice and control. This is the intent of Money Follows the Person for people transitioning from a nursing facility. But, the same also should be true for people who need long term care services to enable them to live as independently as possible *before* having to go into a nursing facility.

Section 16 of S.B. 662 would make it possible for someone *at risk* of going into a nursing facility to receive the same Money Follows the Person services as someone who spent six months in a nursing facility.

AARP also supports streamlining the eligibility process to facilitate a quick transition onto the pilot program. This is particularly important if the program is to act as a nursing facility diversion program. Without a streamlined process, someone could end up waiting just as long for the pilot program, as they would if they just went to the nursing facility for 6 months and then qualified for Money Follows the Person.

AARP believes that long term care services should be aimed at reaching consumers before they have to spend down their assets in a nursing facility, which then makes it that much harder for them to live independently in the community.

Let me conclude with a personal experience. I have a very good friend in his mid-70's) with advanced Parkinson's disease. He has had live-in help for the last year or two. His wife has a chronic lung problem, probably terminal, who has been in the hospital and rehab facilities for the past several years. My friend has exhausted most of his insurance benefits -- GE plus Medicare, plus savings and still has lots of outstanding medical expenses.

I have had several meeting with him to see if I could give him some suggestions. I advised him to get in touch with the Westport Senior Center, they have been very cooperative. I also recommended that he contact a knowledgeable senior law specialist -

he has done that. My point is that others who are struggling with how to handle such crises, need a single point contact that they can turn to. Most don't have the foggiest notion of what should be done. Let's help them by supporting the long-term pilot program described in Section 16 of S.B. 662.