



National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society

National Multiple Sclerosis Society
Connecticut Chapter
659 Tower Avenue, First Floor
Hartford, CT 06112-1269
860.714.2300 or 1.800.344.4867
Fax: 860.714.2301
www.ctfightsMS.org

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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 Susan Raimondo and I am the Community Programs Director at the Connecticut Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. I serve on the Long Term Care Advisory Council as the family caregiver representative. I have lived with MS in my family for 30 years.

The National MS Society extends our appreciation to the Human Services Committee, Appropriations Committee, Governor Rell and the General Assembly for including \$720,000 in the Governor’s budget for the Connecticut Home Care Program for the Disabled Pilot. Special recognition goes out to all of you and also the CT Department of Social Services and their Alternate Care Unit for their phenomenal work to develop and implement the program.

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.

Last session the legislature created the Connecticut Home Care Program for the Disabled Pilot. The program launched on October 1, 2007 will serve approximately 40 people aged 18 – 64 with degenerative, neurological conditions, who are not eligible for other programs and who need case management and other supportive services. The second year of the biennium budget includes \$720,000 that will continue home care for these 40 people. We want to expand this wonderful program that is helping people with disabilities at risk to safely remain at home.

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Please support the expansion of the Connecticut Home Care Program for the Disabled.

The Connecticut Home Care Program for the Disabled is helping a small number of severely disabled individuals remain living in their own homes. At the end of January 2008, the program is serving 17 individuals, which includes 9 individuals with multiple sclerosis, 3 individuals with Parkinson's disease, 2 persons with early onset Alzheimer's Disease/Dementia, and three other individuals with very rare disorders.

This pilot program is state funded and serves individuals who are not covered by current programs to receive homecare. They need help with activities of daily living, may have limited family support, cognitive impairment, and/or needs that change and progress over time. The program includes care assessment and monitoring services which are essential for this population that has cognitive or other significant impairments whose needs cannot be met by the self-directed care model and who don't qualify for existing Medicaid.

The Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders has saved the State of Connecticut millions of dollars; providing this type of care for all people with disabilities improves their lives and can be cost effective as well.

The Connecticut Home Care Program for the Disabled pilot is helping individuals from the entire state of Connecticut. Two examples include:

One man from Northcentral CT is in his 40's, is married and lives with his wife and 2 sons, ages 9 and 12. He has a very rare form of neurofibromatosis, a progressive disease which causes brain tumors leading to cognitive and physical disabilities. This man cannot be left alone and every week his wife would drive him across the state to his elderly parent's home where he would stay for five days while she worked. On the weekend his wife would pick up her husband so that they could enjoy time together as a family. The stress on their family was immense.

The Connecticut Home Care Program for the Disabled is helping this individual by providing funding for him to attend a local adult day center five days a week. Every night, he now goes home and can be part of his immediate family and can enjoy time with his children.

The pilot is also making a difference for a woman from Southcentral CT. She has advanced multiple sclerosis and was home alone all day for many hours because she could not get out of recliner chair. This individual needed assistance with bathing, getting to the commode, making meals and home making. She is 60 and her husband works 3 jobs to afford health insurance and their medical expenses. They declared bankruptcy and were trying to hold on. They did not have any ongoing help in the home. She went for 10 days without getting out of the recliner!

The home care pilot has been providing her with assistance with bathing, getting to the commode, grocery shopping, meal preparation and home making. The assistance has made a huge difference in her life. Her husband is sleeping at night because she is safe during the day and with the help of the home health aide, they have been able to get her out of the recliner chair and to the commode.

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Please support the expansion of the Connecticut Home Care Program for the Disabled.

The home care agency is investigating additional types of assistive devices that may be helpful for her. This individual was severely depressed because she had lost control of everything. She now is very positive and hopeful about the future!

The National MS Society believes all people with disabilities should have access to long-term care that is designed to help people live as independently as possible and may be provided in a person's home, at other sites in the community or in managed residential or institutional settings.

Additionally, S.B. 414 would increase the funding for the Medicaid Personal Care Assistance (PCA) Waiver Program by \$2.5 million. Currently, there is a huge waiting list for the self-directed Medicaid PCA Waiver Program. Section 3 of S.B. 414 would help get a number of people off that waiting list for that program.

We support S.B. No. 414, An Act Concerning the State-funded Home Care Program for the Disabled and Personal Care Assistance Program for the Disabled, and urge this committee to vote favorably on the legislation.

Thank you for your support.

Susan Raimondo
Community Programs Director
Connecticut Chapter
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
659 Tower Avenue, First Floor
Hartford, CT 06112-1269
sraimondo@ctfightsms.org; Phone: 860.714.2300, ext. 229

