



CONNECTICUT  
ASSOCIATION  
of NONPROFITS

*...to serve, strengthen  
and support Connecticut's  
nonprofit community.*

Testimony before the Human Services Committee  
3/4/08 Public Hearing – written record only

In support of:

**Raised SB 562, AAC Increased Access to the Medicaid Program for the Medically Needy Elderly and Disabled**

**Raised SB 564, AAC Services for Persons with Mental Health Needs**

**Raised HB 5792, AAC the Asset Test Used to Determine Eligibility for the State-Administered General Assistance Program**

**BY LIZA ANDREWS, PUBLIC POLICY SPECIALIST**

The Connecticut Association of Nonprofits represents over 500 nonprofit organizations in CT, approximately 300 of which are state funded. Many of our members provide services to some of the state's most vulnerable residents. Our members and their clients would benefit from the provisions of these three important bills and we urge your support.

**Raised SB 562, AAC Increased Access to the Medicaid Program for the Medically Needy Elderly and Disabled**

This bill will increase the income eligibility of the aged, blind and disabled needed to qualify for Medicaid, bringing it up to 185% of the federal poverty level. This is equal to the income requirements for adults on HUSKY A. Simply put, the state is currently requiring the aged, blind and disabled to be significantly more impoverished than other residents seeking Medicaid benefits. This seems counterproductive given the need for health and human services among this population.

Currently, the "spend down" required for the aged, blind and disabled is equal to approximately 60-70% of the federal poverty level. This means that in a given six month period members of this population must incur enough medical bills to "spend down" their monthly income to around \$500 in order to be eligible for Medicaid. In the same six month period an adult on HUSKY A, whose income can be at 185% of the federal poverty level to receive the same Medicaid benefits, can have an income of approximately \$1,600. Unfortunately, what this means is that many aged, blind and disabled will simply give up trying to get onto Medicaid and ultimately forgo receiving basic preventative care because they lack insurance coverage. Their health quickly deteriorates and they end up receiving treatment for an exacerbated illness in the emergency room, costing the state and taxpayers even more money.

There is no justification for having different income standards for different populations. We urge you to equalize income eligibility requirements for the aged, blind and disabled with others eligible for Medicaid.

**Raised SB 564, AAC Services for Persons with Mental Health Needs**

This bill will allow the Department of Social Services (DSS) to establish a program to provide grants to providers to increase acute care services available to patients with severe and persistent psychiatric disabilities. Furthermore, it requires that the Departments of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), Children and Families (DCF) and Social Services work in conjunction to increase the availability of intermediate care services and programs in the state for children and adults with mental health needs, including prevention, early intervention, treatment and rehabilitative services. This measure will assist many nonprofit providers already struggling to help so many of the state's residents who have mental health needs. We encourage increasing the availability of prevention and early intervention programs as this will save the state money in the long run.

**Raised HB 5792, AAC the Asset Test Used to Determine Eligibility for the State-Administered General Assistance Program**

This bill will increase the asset limit to be eligible for SAGA cash assistance benefits from \$250 to \$1,000. Many of our members serve clients who are in need of cash assistance through SAGA. However, it is difficult for many of them to meet the asset limit requirement simply because they own a car. Unfortunately, owning a car does not mean that they have the ability to pay their bills at the end of the month. When people are receiving treatment for various reasons (i.e.: mental health needs, substance abuse, etc.), the stability of their life is always directly proportional to the success of their treatment. If they are unable to pay their rent or their utilities and subsequently become homeless, it is all the more difficult for providers to successfully treat them as they move from shelter to shelter. Helping these men and women maintain a stable life so that they may receive and be invested in the proper treatment will ultimately facilitate their ability to no longer need state assistance.

Again, we respectfully urge you to support these important pieces of legislation. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or to be put in touch with a nonprofit organization in your community that can provide additional details.

Thank you.