



**Testimony of AARP Connecticut on  
H.B. 5311, S.B. 453, S.B. 455, H.B. 5297, & S.B. 451  
Select Committee on Aging  
January 27, 2008**

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people 50+ have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. On behalf of our 630,000 AARP members in Connecticut, we express our support for H.B. 5311, which will increase the TFA child-only grants for relative caregivers to the prevailing foster care rates. We also support S.B. 453, S.B. 455, and H.B. 5297, which will benefit our members by increasing and improving long-term care options that provide choice and independence for people, in a setting that is least restrictive and most appropriate to their needs. AARP also offers recommendation on S.B. 451 that will ensure that the proposed "Silver Alert" system has appropriate safeguards to protect the privacy and independence of seniors.

**H. B. 5311, An Act Increasing Temporary Family Assistance Benefits for Caretaker Relatives.**

AARP strongly supports H.B. 5311, which will increase the TFA child only grants for grandparent and relative caregivers so they are equal to the prevailing foster care rates paid by DCF. Under current law grandparents or relative caregivers are given drastically different funding and support depending on whether their grandchild was first committed to DCF foster care. Those who qualify for the Subsidized Guardianship program through DCF will get roughly double the funding of other grandparents/relative caregivers, who only qualify for a child-only TFA grant.

Under DCF's Subsidized Guardianship Program relative care can receive \$771.90 to \$847.20 (per 30-day month, per child). However, relative caregivers that do not qualify for Subsidized Guardianship Program only get \$354 to \$427 for their first child under TFA and a small fraction of that for additional children.

Grandparents are often thrust into the role of parents under traumatic emotional circumstances without any notice. Whatever the circumstances—prison, drugs, abandonment, abuse, death, illness, divorce—they're never happy. And painful emotions get mixed in. Relative caregivers rarely have the luxury to consider all their options and determine what process for getting their grandchild would provide the most support for raising that child. Instead, grandparents and relatives first and foremost see their relative in need and step up to help—not knowing that their decisions will significantly impact the amount of support and benefit the state will give them

All children are equally in need of a stable home, food, and clothes, yet the state has determined that one set of relative caregivers are entitled to less than half of the foster care rate, simply because they obtained guardianship in a particular way.

AARP commends the Aging Committee for taking the lead on grandparent issues over the past several years and we ask for your support on H.B. 5311, which will create financial parity among relative caregivers so that our children have the basics they need to grow up and become responsible, contributing members of society. AARP strongly urges your support for H.B. 5311.

**S. B. 453, An Act Concerning Financial Assistance to the State's Assisted Living Pilot Projects.**

AARP supports S.B. 453 because it would double the number of individuals that can access the state assisted living pilot program from 75 to 150. AARP supports choices when it comes to long-term care—allowing people to maintain their independence in the most appropriate, least restrictive setting with expanded and affordable financing options.

Given reductions in retirement savings due to the worsening economy, it is even more important to ensure that low-income seniors get the support they need to remain in an appropriate, least restrictive setting of their choice. This prevents these individuals from having to use a more expensive nursing home placement simply because they can no longer afford the less expensive assisted living alternative.

AARP would also encourage the Committee to take this proposal a step further so there is no cap on the number that could utilize the program. We believe that if assisted living is an appropriate choice for an individual and they meet the income/asset criteria, they should be entitled to choose the less expensive assisted living pilot over the more expensive nursing home alternative.

**S. B. 455, An Act Concerning the Nursing Home Bill of Rights**

AARP supports S.B. 455. Too often people lose even the simplest rights when they become nursing home residents: Privacy when they sleep and bathe; Freedom to go wherever and whenever they want to visit with friends and relatives; Choice of what they eat or wear; Control of their money. The nursing home bill of rights was designed to help ensure people can keep their privacy and dignity, but some facilities have routinely asked their residents to waive or contract away the basic protections afforded in the nursing facility bill of rights.

S.B. 455 will protect basic rights for residents of a nursing home or chronic care facility by prohibiting those rights from being rescinded, abrogated or reduced by contract. Any facility covered by the bill would face a fine of at least \$1,000 per occurrence for promulgating admissions contracts that seek to abrogate or diminish the patient's rights under the bill or in the federal Social Security Act.

**H. B. 5297 An Act Concerning the Status of the Money Follows the Person Project.**

As an active participant of the Money Follows the Person Steering Committee, AARP supports efforts to make the Money Follows the Person demonstration project transparent and successful. H.B. 5297 will require the Commissioner of Social Services to make semi annual reports to the General Assembly on the status of the Money Follows the Person project. These reports will add transparency and accountability to the process, ultimately making sure that the 700 transitions happen with all deliberate speed.

**S. B. 451, An Act Establishing a Silver Alert System**

If the Committee is interested in setting up a "Silver Alert" system, AARP recommends that you include appropriate limitations that address the following:

- The individual who is eligible to be the subject of an alert has been adjudicated by a court to be incapable of managing his or her own personal affairs, such as through a guardianship proceeding, or has a documented diagnosis of a mental illness, injury or condition that causes the individual to be incapable of making personal care decisions.
- Age is not an appropriate criterion for coverage by an alert system.
- The individual who is eligible to initiate an alert is a legal guardian, a close family member, lives in the same household, or is a caregiver and has had very recent contact with the subject of the alert.
- The alert system protects the privacy, dignity, independence and autonomy of the subject of the alert.

