

# alzheimer's association™

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## **Position Statement in support of Raised Bill No. #5312, An Act Concerning Criminal Background Checks for Employees of Homemaker-Companion Agencies**

**By Christine I. Andrew, Esq, Member of the Board of Directors for the Alzheimer's  
Association Connecticut Chapter**

The Alzheimer's Association is a donor supported, non-profit organization serving the needs of families, health care professionals, and those individuals who are affected with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. The Association provides information and resources, support groups, education and training, and a 24 hour, 7 Day a week Helpline.

The Alzheimer's Association recognizes that the individual who provides direct care services is the most important determinant of quality dementia care across all care settings. To help ensure quality care, the National Alzheimer's Association recommends that background checks be conducted for all staff working with the elderly and that the abuse registry be checked when applicable. The Association believes that implementation and enforcement of these procedures can provide peace of mind -- not only to families with a loved one in a residential care setting and but particularly for those bringing a home health worker into their home.

The basic assumption underlying these recommendations is that there is a relationship between criminal history and propensity to commit abuse or property theft in the future. In addition to anecdotal evidence regarding crimes committed by paid caregivers that ranged from petty to murder, recent federally financed studies have investigated existing

employment screening procedures. Two recent federally funded studies support this assumption.

Given the unique frailty and vulnerability of individuals with dementia, we believe that legislation should be enacted or rules adopted to require that all long-term care providers, including skilled nursing and assisted living residences, home health agencies and companion services conduct criminal background checks before hiring staff members. But more is needed than simply collecting background data. A critical component must include guidelines regarding how that information will be used. There is a tremendous potential benefit to both individuals receiving care and to service providers in having a uniform set of procedures as well as standards that specify which crimes ought to disqualify an individual from working in a long term care setting, whether in a facility or in a private home, as well as how long a particular crime's disqualification should last.