



**Testimony of AARP in Support of
S.B. 489, "An Act Concerning a Single Point of Entry for Long-Term Care"
Select Committee on Aging
February 19, 2009**

On behalf of more than 620,000 members in Connecticut, AARP supports S.B. 489, "An Act Concerning a Single Point of Entry for Long-Term Care." Last year over 60 co-sponsors supported similar legislation to create a Single Point of Entry, which was the top recommendation in Connecticut's 2007 Long-Term Care needs assessment. The bill passed through several committees on unanimous votes, but unfortunately, the bill got tied up in budget negotiations and wasn't acted on before the session expired.

AARP believes it is essential for CT to create and fund a Single Point of Entry system for long-term care services and supports this year. States that are leading the way in long-term care rebalancing have recognized that a Single Point of Entry is a critical first step in rebalancing. The great majority of families in CT will continue to pay privately for most of the long-term care services that they may need. However, they need assistance in understanding the options available, in learning how to make better use of their own resources, and in preventing or delaying spend-down to Medicaid.

And, for people needing help in paying for their long term care, Connecticut's current system of multiple waivers, numerous state and federal programs, numerous small pilot programs--all with different eligibility criteria--is very confusing. Consumers should not have to chase after long-term care information from a bewildering array of sources, but unfortunately that is the situation today for Connecticut families.

A recent survey from the University of Connecticut Center on Aging shows that Connecticut residents don't have sufficient knowledge of what is involved in obtaining long-term care. A separate survey conducted for AARP in 2008 found that a large majority of state residents "strongly support" the creation of a central place where people

needing long-term care services can get information about what services and benefits are available and can get help in applying for them. A majority of those surveyed called the need for a central place to go for information or referrals for government and private long-term care “extremely important.”

S.B. 489 would address these concerns by establishing a statewide Single Point of Entry to act as a one-stop portal for Connecticut residents and their loved ones to explore all long-term care options available to them. Connecticut already has one successful Single Point of Entry pilot program in the South Central region launched on October 1, 2008. Ongoing funding for that ADRC as well as an expansion into the western part of Connecticut will be provided through a federal nursing home diversion grant that runs through March 31, 2010. S.B. 489 would secure the long-term viability of these pilot projects and expansion into all regions of the state.

A single point of entry will save the state Medicaid dollars by connecting families that private pay with information and options to stretch their own resources and avoid or delay spending down to Medicaid and by connecting people who do need public support with the programs that can help them remain as independent as possible and prevent or delay the need for more costly institutional services.

AARP strongly supports S.B. 489 as a necessary prerequisite to any future efforts to reform long-term care. Without an adequate place to get long-term care information and services, we believe people will not receive the support they need to remain independent in the community, resulting in costly nursing facility placements that may otherwise be avoided.

We look forward to working with members of the committee on this important legislation. Thank You.