



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

### LONG TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

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#### SELECT COMMITTEE ON AGING

Public Hearing

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Testimony of

Nancy Shaffer, State Ombudsman

Senator Prague, Representative Serra and distinguished members of the Select Committee on Aging, thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony regarding a new State Department on Aging. My name is Nancy Shaffer and I am the State Long Term Care Ombudsman.

The Long Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP) is an independent advocacy program mandated by the Older American's Act to protect the health, safety, welfare, and the rights of long term care residents. The Older American's Act recognizes that differences exist amongst the states and territories of the United States and thus does not prescribe one organizational structure or placement for the fifty-two programs. The Connecticut Ombudsman Program is an independent office administratively based in the Department of Social Services. The State Ombudsman is responsible for all functions of the Ombudsman Program. While the LTCOP receives its federal funding through the State Unit on Aging, there is also a Memorandum of Understanding reflecting the relationship of the Ombudsman Program at the public policy level with the DSS Commissioner. It is essential that clear control by the State Ombudsman over the administration of the Program exists in order to assure the independence of the LTCOP, as required by both federal and state law.

It makes sense that the configuration of a new State Department on Aging will include both the State Unit on Aging and the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program. At the same time it is unclear as to what other programs and services should fall under the purview of the new State Department on Aging. Policy makers and advocates have raised questions regarding the reorganization and restructuring of services which effect both the aging and disabled populations. As an example, the LTCOP utilizes an array of services and programs both within the Department of Social Services and the wider state services and advocacy network to provide advocacy for long term care consumers, no matter their age or disability. With current economic challenges both at the state and the individual citizen level, visibility and access to services should be a priority.

As the State Ombudsman, I embrace the opportunity of a new State Department on Aging. The creation of the new DoA should be done in a prudent and deliberative manner. The Ombudsman Program is hopeful that legislators, policy makers and advocates, along with proponents of both bills 841 and 993 will engage in further discussion to ensure that the new State Department on Aging will fully meet the needs of all of Connecticut's long term care consumers.

I thank the Committee for this opportunity to present testimony and look forward to working together with you to assure quality of long term care and services to Connecticut's residents.