



Advocating for Older Adults of Today and Tomorrow

Testimony of
Julia Evans Starr, Executive Director
Connecticut Commission on Aging

Government Administration and Elections
March 16, 2009

RE: SB 840, An Act Concerning the Elimination of the Office of the Consumer Counsel, The Office of the Healthcare Advocate, the Office of Ombudsman for Property Rights and Certain Legislative Commissions.

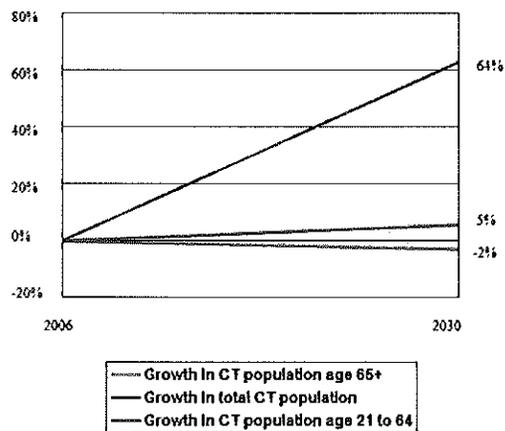
Thank you for this opportunity to comment on SB 840 and in support of the CT Commission on Aging. We ask you to reject Governor Rell's call to eliminate the Connecticut Commission on Aging.

The CoA is the independent state agency solely devoted to enhancing the lives of present and future generations of our state's older adults...and to preparing our state for a dramatically changed demographic. For fifteen years, the Commission has served as an effective leader in statewide efforts to promote choice, independence and dignity for Connecticut's older adults and persons with disabilities. We also provide critical oversight over programs and services for older adults provided by executive branch agencies.

CoA's work - as an independent, non-partisan state policy agency - is not duplicated within either present or proposed offices of the Executive or Legislative branches of government.

Especially, in these difficult budget times, research-based initiatives, statewide planning efforts, vision and creative thinking are all needed and provided by the CoA. We, at the Commission on Aging, are a critical piece of the solution!

Dedicated, objective focus on aging-related issues is key to our state's successful future. Connecticut is one of the nation's oldest states and demographics indicate that our population of older adults is set to explode in the next twenty years. According to the Long-Term Care Needs Assessment commissioned by the Legislature and overseen by the CoA, our state's population of individuals aged 65 and up will increase by 64% by the year 2030. As our older population grows and experiences unprecedented longevity, resources will be stretched to serve this population.



We help the Legislature and others meet these challenges, identify opportunities, prioritize funding and plan for our state's future.

We do so with a fully engaged team comprised of 4 staff members, a citizen board, volunteers, interns, and partners...all with a modest budget of approximately \$460,000.

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LTC website: www.ct.gov/longtermcare

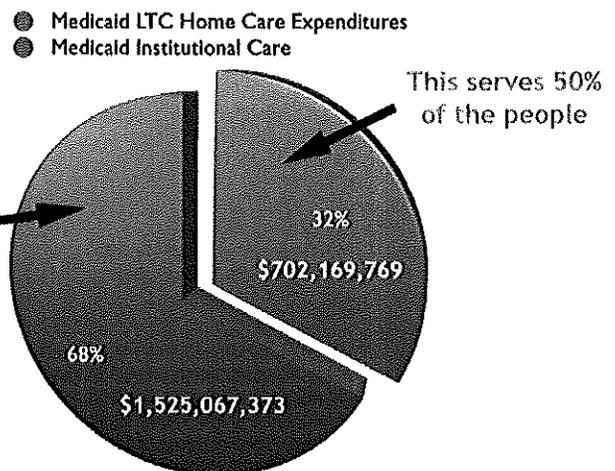
To accomplish our work with maximum efficiency, we pursue creative means to achieve our results. For example, we have associations with the UConn School of Social Work and UConn Law School, and have enlisted high-quality, unpaid interns and research volunteers to assist us. We also have a 17-member volunteer citizen board, whose time, energy and efforts make connections to communities across the state...and identify and promote smart solutions to a variety of aging-related issues.

As an illustration, a CoA initiative addresses the economic security of older adults, while also mitigating looming workforce shortages. Our “Redefining Retirement Years” initiative involved statewide focus groups and national research and resulted in a series of published reports, utilizing in-house staff and volunteers. Our latest report on this issue resulted in data-driven policy options that could save the state millions of dollars annually by providing more flexible work opportunities for its older workers. This committee is graciously raising a bill that reflects those options. So, thank you.

In response to a fragmented, institutionally-biased long-term care system, the CoA with its partners seeks to streamline and improve state government and its services. To that end, we believe we will prove to be a tremendous asset for the new Commission on Enhancing Agency Outcomes. Indeed, we have already submitted a proposal for the new Commission’s consideration that would restructure state government to better integrate, coordinate, and streamline long-term care services and supports in CT. Our proposal is founded by national research and models best practices.

In a variety of ways, CoA provides critical leadership in the area of long-term care services and supports, which represent over \$2 billion, or 14%, of the state budget. Using

research and recommendations from the state’s Long-Term Care Needs Assessment, CoA has developed policy proposals that could save Connecticut taxpayers \$600 million each year. **These proposals also increase choice in how and where people receive care, thereby increasing quality of life.**



As part of this leadership, CoA co-chairs the legislatively-mandated Long-Term Care Advisory Council, a remarkable collaboration of providers, consumers and advocates for older adults and persons with disabilities. The Advisory Council works collaboratively towards more efficient state government, helping to design systems that eliminate overlap and duplication. This approach represents national trends and best practices; combining programming benefits both constituencies and streamlines government.

Additionally, this year the CoA embraced Results Based Accountability and has begun working with the Appropriations Committee on this new, cutting-edge initiative. Any objective assessment of CoA’s performance will reveal a low-cost, highly efficient and effective independent agency that delivers a sound investment in Connecticut’s future.

In closing, we ask for your support for the Connecticut Commission on Aging so that we can continue to assist our state in finding solutions to the many challenges that are before us. Our demonstrated leadership, data-driven solutions, and responsible financial management will serve the state well in the months and years ahead.