

5057



**Testimony of Lance Johnson,  
AARP Health and Supportive Service Advocacy Leader  
On H.B. 5057  
Human Services Committee  
February 5, 2008**

Chairman Doyle, Chairwoman Walker, Ranking members Kane and Gibbons and members of the Human Services Committee, I am Lance Johnson, AARP's lead advocate for Health and Supportive Services issues. With the support of our 40 million AARP members nationwide, including over 629,000 in Connecticut, AARP comes here today in enthusiastic support of H.B. 5057 "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,<sup>1</sup> which was the top recommendation in Connecticut's 2007 Long-Term Care needs assessment. The bill passed through this committee, as well as, GAE and Appropriations 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

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<sup>1</sup> Note: For purposes of this testimony the terms "ADRC" and "Single Point of Entry" are used interchangeably.

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."

H.B. 5057 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. The Single Point of Entry system should build on existing structures overseen by the Department of Social Services (DSS) through the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and the Centers for Independent Living (CILs). 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. H.B. 5057 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 H.B. 5057 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.

