

alzheimer's association

Testimony to the Human Services Committee in **support of Raised Bill #989-An Act Concerning the Alzheimer's Respite Program**

March 3, 2009

Good Morning Senator Doyle, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Nancy Leonard and I am the Senior Director of Programs & Constituent Relations at the Alzheimer's Association Connecticut chapter. I am here today **in support of raised bill number 989, An Act Concerning the Alzheimer's Respite care Program.**

The Alzheimer's Association is a donor supported, non profit organization serving the needs of families, health care professionals and those individuals affected with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders.

Currently in Connecticut there are approximately 70,000 residents living with Alzheimer's disease and Related Dementias with over 112,000 caregivers. Seven out of every ten individuals with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias are cared for at home. The caregivers of our state are the unsung heroes. The journey of Alzheimer's disease is like running a marathon that lasts about 20 years- seven days a week, 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. Respite care is one of tools to help the caregiver through the long complicated journey. As many of you are aware, caregivers often struggle to meet the challenges of caring for a loved one with this disease. Three weeks ago, the Chapter's Helpline received a call late on a Friday afternoon about a family member who had been displaying combative behaviors in public. Exhaustion had overcome the family members, and it was a crisis situation. Our staff was able to work with the North Central Area Agency on Aging to secure respite funds and the gentleman was placed in a secured dementia unit for a few days to be evaluated. This gave the family members a break knowing their loved one was in capable hands and a care plan was implemented so that

the necessary supports were put in place to have the gentleman return home safely. It is an often common situation like this which demonstrates the reason why this program is so necessary. Today, we ask you to support the concepts highlighted in this bill which will make the program more effective. We are asking for Personal Care Assistant services to be added as a care option in the program. As a former care manager, I understand that this would be a cost effective option. We also are asking that the commissioner may adopt regulations to provide up to \$7500 for services upon special case review. The grant size currently is at \$3500 and some complex cases in the program may warrant additional services. Additionally, we ask you to support adjusting the income and asset eligibility criteria for this program, which has not changed since its inception in 1997. The families & friends of the individuals with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia's want to help their loved ones. I see it and hear it every day and as I have for the last two decades. Thank you for your time this morning I would be willing to answer any questions you may have.