1085

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 1085: AN ACT CONCERNING HOMEMAKER AND COMPANION AGENCIES AND AUDITS FOR VENDOR FRAUD.

Senator Doyle, Representative Walker, and members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Nancy Trawick-Smith and I am the director of Community Companion and Homemaking Services, a non-profit companion-homemaker agency in Willimantic. I am also a member of the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Homemakers and Companions Association. I am testifying in support of SB 1085: **AN ACT CONCERNING HOMEMAKER AND COMPANION AGENCIES AND AUDITS FOR VENDOR FRAUD.** Homemaker and companion agencies are currently audited by the Department of Social Services Department of Quality Assurance to ensure that providers are not being paid for service that has not been provided or service that is not authorized. Auditors basically review documentation, which in the case of homemaker-companion agencies are the timesheets of the employees providing the service. They check to make sure that the service performed does not exceed the service ordered by the program case managers, that the timesheets are properly signed by the client or caregiver, and the activities performed are the activities ordered. Rather than review all of the agency documentation, the auditor will review a sample of maybe 100 visits and look for errors. When an error, for example, a one-hour over service is found the dollar amount of that error is recouped. Because we are dealing with a sampling, DSS will not only recoup what they have paid for that hour. They will compute an error rate for your sample and multiply that by the entire universe of your claims for the two-year period that is being audited. Suddenly a $16 error- a one-hour error- turns into a $3200 error. The idea behind extrapolation is that if you had this error rate in the sampling you must have had the same error rate all the time. The problem is there is no margin for error. You can have a "near perfect" audit and still pay thousand and thousands of dollars back to the government. You have to understand the nature of these "errors". Perhaps it is over servicing a client by a couple of hours because there was a problem with a dryer and the homemaker forgot to call to get the extra time authorized. It might be because a daughter signed a timesheet for her mother and the agency forgot to let the access agency know that a signature is different. These are all hours that are provided but someone merely failed to get the proper authorization or make a phone call within the allowable time period. This bill would create a 10% margin of error.

Currently, any appeal of the audit process goes to just another entity within the Department of Social Services. This would allow the agency to appeal the decision of the Department of Social Services to the Superior Court. This seems only reasonable considering sometimes we are talking about the Department of Social Services recouping tens of thousands of dollars from an agency

because of an unauthorized signature on a timesheet or a homemaker who spends too long at a client's home.

Lastly, this bill would establish a fee for the transportation services that homemakers and companions provide. For over a decade, the access agencies of the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders have requested that homemakers and companions transport clients to medical appointments, to hair appointments, and to the store. There has never been any compensation to the homemaker agencies for the gas the worker uses or the extra liability that they incur. This bill would rectify that situation.

I would like to thank you for hearing my testimony and encourage you to contact me with any questions you might have.

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