

1085

SUPPORT SB-1085

Senator Doyle, Representative Walker, and members of the Human Services Committee,

This testimony is in support of Raised Bill No. 1085, which contains proposed changes to an act concerning homemaker and companion agencies. This legislation will benefit the state's elderly population in the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders by paying a fee for transportation services, defining procedures for vendor audits conducted by the Department of Social Services, and establishing personal care assistance services in the home care program.

As providers contracted with the state's access agencies to service clients in the CHCPE, we have been driving our clients for many years without the ability to charge for those transportation expenses. This is a vital service to an aging population who can live independently, but can no longer safely drive themselves. This program enables them to get out of their homes for shopping, socialization and religious services, plus ensuring their health by giving them access to sick and wellness appointments, medical testing and treatment.

Through their own research at our request, the DSS learned that the CHCPE utilization of their contracted transportation vendors is significantly below other DSS programs. Case managers have known for years that having the clients' companions drive them to appointments is more convenient, more reliable and less disruptive. Providing transportation is a priority for case managers when selecting an agency for referrals.

So while there are many benefits to these services, the employees use their own vehicles and pay for their own fuel and maintenance expenses. Providers may bill only for the time they are with the client, but there is no provision, until now with this legislation, for homemakers and companions to be compensated for their driving costs.

Earlier this legislative session, this committee approved Bill 853, which limits the liability for homemakers and companions who drive their clients. By doing so, you have acknowledged that they are driving clients and it would be unfair of you to ask them to continue to provide this service out of their own pocket. You should approve this amendment that **establishes a fee for transportation services** of not less than \$8 per trip from the client's home to be paid in addition to the hourly rate of the companion.

This bill also addresses fairness and **defines the procedures for the DSS compliance audits.** The amendments request a two-year time limit on the audit period and that the extrapolation projections will not be used in cases where clerical errors, not fraud, result in overpayments or underpayments under a 10 percent error rate. In addition, a provider has the right to request a review of the findings, and also the right to appeal a final decision to the Superior Court. While audits are necessary for the integrity of the program, these provisions ensure the state's vendors have the right to due process and you should approve these amendments.

Another new section in this bill **adds the category of personal care assistance** to the CHCPE. This is another service level being performed by homemaker and companion agencies for their private pay clients and this section would expand services for the benefit of the home and community based waiver programs recipients.

Sincerely yours,

Eileen H. Adams, Secretary

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