



**Testimony of Brenda Kelley,
AARP Connecticut State Director on
S. B. 782, "An Act Promoting the Use of Health Information Technology"
Public Health Committee
March 16, 2009**

Good Morning Chairman Harris, Chairwoman Ritter, ranking members DeBicella and Giegler, and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Brenda Kelley; I am the State Director for AARP Connecticut and a member of the eHealthConnecticut Board of Directors. AARP is a nonprofit, non-partisan membership organization for people age 50 and over. We have more than 40 million members nationwide and over 629,000 in Connecticut. I thank you for the opportunity to address you today on behalf of our members to support S.B. 782, "An Act Promoting the Use of Health Information Technology."

On the national level AARP has been one of the leading advocates for health information technology legislation and for including health IT in the recent American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. AARP believes that all Americans should have access to a secure, uniform, interoperable health care system that provides administrative and confidential medical information. We believe that the adoption of a uniform health information system can improve the patient experience, increase positive health outcomes, and realize significant savings. Health IT has enormous potential to improve the safety, effectiveness, and efficiency of care. It is an essential building block for health reform.

Because of the national efforts that AARP has supported, significant resources soon will be available under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to assist in the expansion of health information technology and the development and implementation of health information exchanges. In CT, we are fortunate that in 2006 eHealthConnecticut was launched with the goal of significantly improving health care through health information technology, and electronic medical records linked to a secure health

information exchange. Since then, eHealthConnecticut, a nonprofit organization, has built a 25 person-board of the key stakeholders needed to effectively launch a CT health information exchange -- medical providers, hospital officials, federally qualified health centers, health plan officials, employers, quality assurance organizations, academia, consumers, & state officials (serving on an ex-officio basis). eHealth has made considerable headway in getting their governance, technical model, and business plan developed so that it would be acceptable and meet the needs of those who would be interacting with the health information exchange. In 2008, eHealthCT was designated as a Chartered Value Exchange by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality which has brought valuable national technical assistance resources to the project. eHealth recently was awarded a grant from the Department of Social Services to create a health information exchange pilot to be utilized for Medicaid patients and fast paced work on this has already been initiated.

About six months ago, as the AARP CT State Director, I was pleased to accept an appointment to the Board of ehealthCT. I'm presently working with a Board subcommittee charged with developing recommendations for E Health's privacy policies and protocols.

It takes time to bring diverse stakeholders together to effectively address the many difficult and potentially divisive issues that developing a health information exchange entails. We're fortunate that health leaders and state policy makers had the foresight to begin work on a CT health information exchange by creating eHealthCT in 2006. We now have an established organization with broad stateholder support that can quickly utilize the federal funding that soon will be available to move health IT and health information exchange forward in our state. SB 782 would designate eHealthCT as a state-wide health information exchange network for CT. eHealthCT has the broad stateholder representation and the mission required for such a designation. With this designation, Connecticut should be well positioned to effectively compete for the federal funding necessary to help make health IT and health information exchange a reality in Connecticut.

AARP commends the Public Health Committee for recognizing the importance of health information technology and health information exchange. We urge you to quickly adopt SB 782 so that Connecticut is will have access to the new federal resources that soon will become available. Without the resources to advance electronic medical records and health information exchange, paperwork will continue to mire our health care system. Consumers will continue to be hurt by the failure to have their vital information in the hands of those who care for them and they will be inconvenienced by the need to fill out redundant forms. Doctors and nurses will continue to struggle to get complete information about their patients and waste time on paperwork that they should be spending on patient care. We deserve better. AARP supports SB 782 and urges its adoption.

