



An independent, nonpartisan office of the Connecticut General Assembly

Testimony of

Julia Evans Starr, Executive Director
Connecticut Commission on Aging

On

Deficit Mitigation Plan

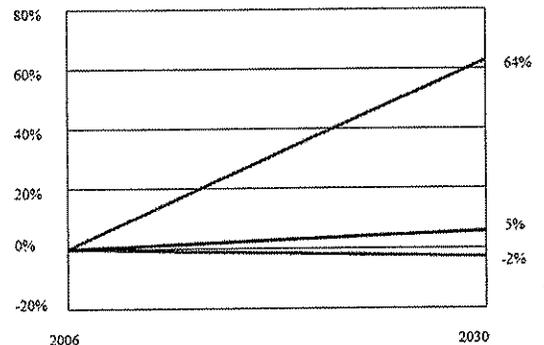
Appropriations Committee

December 9, 2009

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding Governor Rell's proposed deficit mitigation plan.

As you know, the Connecticut Commission on Aging is an independent, nonpartisan state agency that is part of the legislative branch of government. We are devoted to preparing our state for a burgeoning aging population while promoting policies that enhance the lives of the present and future generations of older adults. For over sixteen years, the Commission has served as an effective leader in statewide efforts to promote choice, independence and dignity for Connecticut's older adults and persons with disabilities.

In the current budget year, the Commission on Aging received a budget cut of 53%, more than almost any other state agency or program. Despite this cut, we remain committed to our work of helping to craft good public policy for older adults and for our state. **We ask that you reject Governor Rell's proposal to eliminate the Commission on Aging entirely.** We have done our part.



— Growth in CT population age 65+
— Growth in total CT population
— Growth in CT population age 21 to 64

Dedicated, objective focus on aging-related issues is key to our state's successful future. Connecticut is one of the nation's oldest states and demographics indicate that our population of older adults is set to explode in the next twenty years. According to the Long-Term Care Needs Assessment commissioned by the Legislature and overseen by the CoA, our state's population of individuals aged 65 and up will increase by 64% by the year 2030. As our older population grows and experiences unprecedented longevity, resources will be stretched to serve this population.

State Capitol • 210 Capitol Avenue • Hartford, CT 06106
Phone: 860.240.5200 • Website www.cga.ct.gov/coa
LTC website: www.ct.gov/longtermcare



In a variety of ways, CoA provides critical leadership in the area of long-term care services and supports, which represent over \$2 billion, or approximately 14%, of the state budget. Using research and recommendations from the state's Long-Term Care Needs Assessment, CoA has developed policy proposals that could save Connecticut taxpayers \$600 million each year. These proposals also increase choice in how and where people receive care, thereby increasing quality of life.

In order to save this money and improve quality of life for hundreds of thousands of older adults and their families, Connecticut must keep its commitment to programs and services that serve this population. **We have attached a list of programs that are targeted by the Governor's deficit mitigation plan.** Failure to adequately fund these programs likely will lead to institutionalization for many individuals who could otherwise contribute to their communities. In illustration, it costs the state Medicaid program \$18,000 annually to provide long-term care services for a person living at home versus \$80,000 for someone in a nursing home.

How can Connecticut keep its commitment to these programs during this economic downturn? The CoA has some ideas. We can and will continue to serve as a valuable resource to the Committee. We ask for your consideration of making the following money-saving ideas, some of which are also under consideration by the Commission on Enhancing Agency Outcomes:

- Full implementation of the Nursing Home Drug Return Program: This program saved the state over \$1.2 million in FY '09, but approximately one-third (70) of the state's nursing homes are not participating. It is estimated that, if all nursing homes participated, the state could save another \$600,000 annually.
- Requiring direct deposit of all state employee and retiree paychecks and eliminating paystubs: the Department of Developmental Services has estimated that this change would save that agency alone \$265,000 annually. If applied to all state employees and retirees, we estimate conservatively that the state would save \$2.5 million every year.
- Implementation of ideas contained in the Long-Term Care Needs Assessment to rebalance the long-term care system, for a potential savings of \$600 million annually.
- Developing a single application for most social services programs, which would reduce duplication, paperwork, the need for paper and would enhance efficiency of workers at Department of Social Services, as well as many community-based agencies.

Maximizing federal funds is another way Connecticut can improve the fiscal outlook during these challenging times. The Commission on Aging has identified over \$11 million in federal funds in the past few months alone that will now flow into the state because of our work. Additionally, we worked in partnership with both the executive branch and the legislature to remove an obstacle in state law that restricted federal funds for the conversion of low-income senior housing into assisted living facilities. This small change in state law will not only bring in new federal funds, but will also increase housing options for individuals at risk of institutional care, or who are hoping to leave nursing homes through the Money Follows the Person program.

The Commission on Aging is ready to serve as a resource to you throughout this budget crisis and into the future. Thank you for your hard work on behalf of the people of Connecticut.



Connecticut Commission on Aging

An Independent, Nonpartisan Office of the Connecticut General Assembly



Update: Program Changes Affecting Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities

This update is provided as part of the Commission on Aging's ongoing mission to educate policymakers and stakeholders about emerging issues affecting older adults in CT. 12/4/09

Due to the state's fiscal situation, administrative decisions have been made recently that are not reflective of budget decisions made by the legislature. Some of these changes are:

- **Alzheimer's Respite Care:** This state-funded program offers relief to stressed caregivers by providing information, support, the development of an appropriate plan of care, and services for the individual with Alzheimer's disease or related dementias. DSS closed intake on May 11. **Although sufficient funding was included in the state budget to re-open this program, Secretary Genuario recently indicated that this program will not be re-opened due to the state fiscal crisis.** The Alzheimer's Respite Care program now has a waitlist of 265 people.
- **Falls Prevention:** The biennial budget includes \$500,000 in each year for a comprehensive, evidence-based falls prevention program. **However, Secretary Genuario recently indicated that this program will not receive any funding due to the state fiscal crisis.**

Certain budgetary decisions are now being implemented and affecting thousands of older adults across the state. These include:

- **Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders:** The budget requires a 15% copayment for individuals on the state-funded portion of this program. This copayment will average \$136/month per individual. Failure to pay will result in immediate discontinuation of services. Some legal authorities have questioned the constitutionality of having no appeals process.
- **ConnPACE:** The budget institutes a number of changes to the ConnPACE program. Among them, new ConnPACE applicants will have a restricted enrollment period coinciding with that of Medicare (11/15-12/31 annually). This condensed timeframe will cause difficulty for consumers and is causing a backlog of applications. (Unfortunately this increased demand coincides with reduced state funding to the CHOICES* program and also with strained budgets of senior centers and other related municipal offices). Consumers will also have additional restrictions on which medications ConnPACE will cover. DSS has begun informing ConnPACE recipients of their potential eligibility for the "ConnPACE Plus" program, which links ConnPACE and Medicare Savings Programs. For an OLR summary of recent changes to ConnPACE, click [here](#).
- **Community-Based Services:** This program, funded through the Social Services Block Grant, provides homemaker-companion services, case management, counseling, adult day care, meals, transportation and other services designed to help individuals aged 18-64 maintain success in the community, usually while they await eligibility determination for other, more comprehensive programs. DSS closed intake on May 11 and reduced services to current enrollees on June 15, 2009. This program remains closed and has a wait list of 59 people.

**The CHOICES program is a cooperative program of DSS, Area Agencies on Aging, and the Center for Medicare Advocacy that provides information about services and supports including Medicare Part D and ConnPACE.*

For more information, please contact the CoA at 860-240-5200.

CT Commission on Aging
210 Capitol Avenue, Room 509
Hartford, CT 06106

Phone: (860) 240-5200
Website: www.cga.ct.gov/coa
Email: coa@cga.ct.gov

Working at the State Capitol and beyond
to ensure a brighter future for our state and
for older adults of today and tomorrow.



Connecticut Commission on Aging

An Independent, Nonpartisan Office of the Connecticut General Assembly



Update: Programs and Services Affecting Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities Targeted in the Governor's Deficit Mitigation Plan

This update is provided as part of the Commission on Aging's ongoing mission to educate policymakers and stakeholders about emerging issues affecting older adults in CT. 12/4/09

A number of programs and services have been recommended for cuts through the Governor's Deficit Mitigation Plan (November, 2009). Some of these changes are:

- Complete elimination of all legislative commissions, the budgets of which have already been cut by more than 50%;
- Continuation of closed enrollment in the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program;
- Reduced support for elderly nutrition and home-delivered meals;
- Elimination of coverage of eyeglasses for individuals receiving Medicaid;
- Elimination of coverage of nonemergency dental care for adults in Medicaid and SAGA;
- Elimination of coverage of nonformulary drugs under the Medicare Part D Supplemental Needs Fund;
- Elimination of coverage of over-the-counter drugs under Medicaid;
- Imposition of a required copayment for low-income older adults and persons with disabilities on Medicaid;
- Restriction of certain mental health drugs, by requiring them to be on the Preferred Drug List;
- Increased Medicare Part D copayment requirements for low-income individuals on both Medicare and Medicaid ("dual-eligibles");
- Reduced provider rates for Medicaid providers, including nursing homes, and no increase for adult day centers, which provide needed respite for caregivers;
- Reduced support for Independent Living Centers, which help individuals with disabilities thrive in community settings;
- Elimination of a training program for LPNs, necessary for the workforce of the future; and,
- Reduced employment opportunities and day programs for persons with developmental disabilities.

For more information, please contact the CoA at 860-240-5200.

CT Commission on Aging
210 Capitol Avenue, Room 509
Hartford, CT 06106

Phone: (860) 240-5200
Website: www.cga.ct.gov/coa
Email: coa@cga.ct.gov

*Working at the State Capitol and beyond
to ensure a brighter future for our state
and for older adults of today and
tomorrow.*