

canpfa

The Connecticut Association of Not-for-profit Providers For the Aging

Testimony to the Appropriations Committee Regarding the Governor's Proposed Budget Mitigation Plan

Presented by Mag Morelli, President
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CANPFA members serve thousands of people every day through mission-driven, not-for-profit organizations dedicated to providing the services people need, when they need them, in the place they call home. Our members offer the continuum of aging services: assisted living residences, continuing care retirement communities, residential care homes, nursing homes, home and community based services, and senior housing.

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Mag Morelli and I am the president of the Connecticut Association of Not-for-profit Providers for the Aging (CANPFA), an organization of over 150 non-profit and mission-driven providers of aging services representing the full continuum of long term care.

CANPFA Chair Stephen McPherson and Board Member Bonnie Gauthier provided previous testimony opposing the Governor's plan to cut Medicaid provider rates. I am here to add my voice to that opposition and to provide comments on several other aspects of the Governor's proposal as they relate to long term care.

Elimination of Medicaid Coverage for Non-Emergency Dental Services for Adults

CANPFA opposes the limitation of Medicaid reimbursement for adult dental services. Limiting reimbursement would increase the financial burden that nursing homes already shoulder in order to provide dental services to their residents. Federal law mandates that nursing homes provide the level of services that residents need to achieve and maintain their highest practicable level of functioning. With regard to dental services, that often means contracting with dental providers to ensure that they will provide service to the home's residents. **Further limiting the level of Medicaid reimbursement to the dental providers will only shift an additional cost burden to the nursing facilities and add to their financial stress.**

5% Cut to Home Health Care and Community Based Services in the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders

The state has adopted and embraced a long term care plan with a goal of rebalancing the system and providing choice for individuals seeking long term care. The Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders should be the flag ship program for this plan, but it has already taken a hit with the implementation of a 15% co-pay in the state funded portion of the program. These co-pays are affecting access to care as the elderly who need services are unable to afford the co-pay expense. The Governor's proposed 5% cut to all the Home Care Program services and all other home and community based Medicaid providers will further affect access to community based care as providers will be unwilling or unable to accept these clients.

To prevent our elderly residents from receiving cost effective services in their homes or in the community is extremely short sighted.

An example of this is the affect on Adult Day Centers. Originally slated to receive a 4.2% increase on their \$63.55 a day rate, they are now proposed to see a 5% cut which would bring their state rate to \$60.37. Many adult day centers will be forced to close at this rate and many of their elderly clients that are not able to find alternative care in the community will be forced to forego needed services or to find placement in a nursing home.

Continuation of Closed Enrollment in the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program

Family caregivers have an important role to play in the long-term care system, but the challenges facing them are great. Connecticut's unpaid caregivers provided over \$1 billion worth of care to relatives and in return, they are called upon to sacrifice lost wages and to face significant physical and mental health risks. The risks of poor health and premature death are greatest among those who care for relatives with Alzheimer's disease. In order to continue reaping the benefits that family caregivers provide to older adults, we as a society must increase our support for them. A crucial aspect of that support is funding for respite care.

We urge the committee to reopen the respite program.

Complete Elimination of all Legislative Commissions

As a representative of the full continuum of long term care services for older adults, CANPFA members look to the Commission on Aging as one of the leading advocates on behalf of all older adults. As an independent agency, the Commission on Aging is able to take an objective view of the spectrum of services to determine what is needed for our older adults and to advocate for what is right for both the consumer and the state.

As a member of the Long Term Care Advisory Committee, CANPFA has witnessed the leadership that has been displayed by the Commission and its executive director. A unifying force, the Commission on Aging has brought together a diverse spectrum of advocates to work toward the common goal of achieving a seamless system of long term care. This is extremely important as we move beyond the traditional approach of viewing programs and services as individual silos and begin to look at long term care as a complete continuum of services. The Commission has moved us forward in this direction and we believe that the elderly citizens of this state have benefited from it. From the recent comprehensive long term care needs assessment to the State's consumer friendly long term care web site, the Commission has been a leader.

We encourage the Committee to support the Commission on Aging and to look to it as a resource to the Legislature and a benefit to older citizens of this state.

Elimination of Training Programs for Licensed Practical Nurses

An adequate future workforce is an issue and a concern for all of health care providers and particularly for aging service providers. Licensed practical nurses play an important role in the long term care workforce and as the population ages; the need for long term care health care workers will increase dramatically.

We believe that investing in the training of health care workforce is not only extremely important, but a good investment for the state.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions.

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