C4A

Connecticut Association of Area Agencies on Aging, Inc.

Testimony – Government Administration and Elections Committee 3/16/09

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Position

- **C4A opposes the provision of Senate Bill 840, An Act Concerning the Elimination of the Office of Consumer Counsel, the Office of the Healthcare Advocate, the Office of Ombudsman for Property Rights and Certain Legislative Commissions, that seeks to eliminate the Commission on Aging.**

Background

The Connecticut Association of Area Agencies on Aging (C4A) opposes the Governor's proposal to eliminate funding for the Commission on Aging for the following reasons:

- **The Commission on Aging has lead efforts to identify, prioritize and promote the needs of older adults and individuals with disabilities.** The Commission was the lead advocate for, and performed significant coordinative work in support of, the Connecticut Long-Term Care Needs Assessment that was conducted by the University of Connecticut Center on Aging in 2008. Further, the Commission publicized the results of the Needs Assessment through its web site, diverse media outlets, regional meetings and a forum for members of the committees of cognizance in this area of work. This has resulted in greatly enhanced exposure for the needs of both populations, which was extremely instrumental as the State began to implement plans for "re-balancing" its long-term care system. Finally, the Commission has engaged in various research projects, on such topics as re-definition of the role of older adults in retirement years and property taxes, that have highlighted important trends in major issues of concern.

- **The Commission on Aging acts as an expert resource to legislators on aging issues.** The Commission on Aging takes both global and more individually tailored approaches to supporting legislators in their need for information on aging issues. From the more global standpoint, the Commission has regularly sponsored major forums on aging issues. Notable among these in 2008 were events in support of publicizing the results of the Needs Assessment, and a high level policy discussion of Connecticut property tax issues. The

Commission also frequently offers expert assistance to legislators in support of bill drafting, constituent questions and services and supports across the long-term care continuum.

- **The Commission on Aging serves important coordinative functions.** The Commission has performed an essential leadership role in convening and facilitating the work of the Long-Term Care Advisory Council (LTCAC) and the Connecticut Elder Action Network (CEAN). Serving as co-chair of the LTCAC, the Commission has effectively engaged a broad range of advocates for older adults and individuals with disabilities with the goal of addressing issues of mutual interest and concern. These efforts have engendered unprecedented partnerships and highlighted the need for integration and choice in provision of services and supports to both populations. With respect to CEAN, the Commission has coalesced a historically heterogenous group of elderly services organizations, of which C4A is a part, into a working coalition that achieves consensus on prioritization of issues, permits efficient communication of common messages and allows for rapid response.

- **The Commission on Aging promotes a positive and progressive image of aging.** Through such events as the Age Wise Advocate Award, and the Earth's Elders project, the Commission has helped to promote an image of aging that captures the diversity of experience that is aging in our society. The Commission's work helps to challenge outmoded notions and expectations about life stages, and illustrate the great benefits of connections across generations.

In conclusion, C4A respectfully respects that the Appropriations Committee reject the Governor's proposal to eliminate funding for the Commission on Aging.