



*An independent, nonpartisan office of the Connecticut General Assembly*

---

Testimony of

**Julia Evans Starr, Executive Director**  
Connecticut Commission on Aging

*Medicaid Personal Care Assistance Waiver Renewal*

Appropriations and Human Services Committees

June 16, 2009

Thank you for this opportunity to comment today on the proposed 1915(c) Home and Community Based Services Waiver for Personal Care Assistance (PCA) services.

As you know, the Connecticut Commission on Aging is an independent, nonpartisan state agency that is part of the legislative branch of government. Through our research and public policy expertise, 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 fifteen 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. The Commission also serves as the co-chair of the statutorily-mandated Long-Term Care Advisory Council (§17b-338).

As part of Results-Based Accountability, the Connecticut Commission on Aging is working toward the following Population Result: "All present and future older adults in Connecticut live in the secure, healthy and productive environment of their choice." A major component of this goal is the widespread availability of home- and community-based services under Medicaid, as an alternative to institutional care. These services are also essential to fulfilling requirements for serving individuals in "the least restrictive, appropriate setting," as set forth by the Olmstead decision and state law (§17b-337).

Personal care assistance services are among the most cost-effective types of home- and community-based services. The PCA waiver currently serves 748 adults of all ages with disabilities who are able to self-direct their care. PCAs help individuals with daily activities such as showering, dressing, and transferring to wheelchairs - allowing many individuals with disabilities to actively participate in community life, hold jobs, travel, volunteer and visit family and friends. Many individuals with PCAs are actively involved in state government; you may have seen them testify in this building, helping to set state policy.

The legislature has already shown support for PCA services this session by voting to add those services to both the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders (PA 09-64) and the Statewide Respite Care Program (PA 09-75).

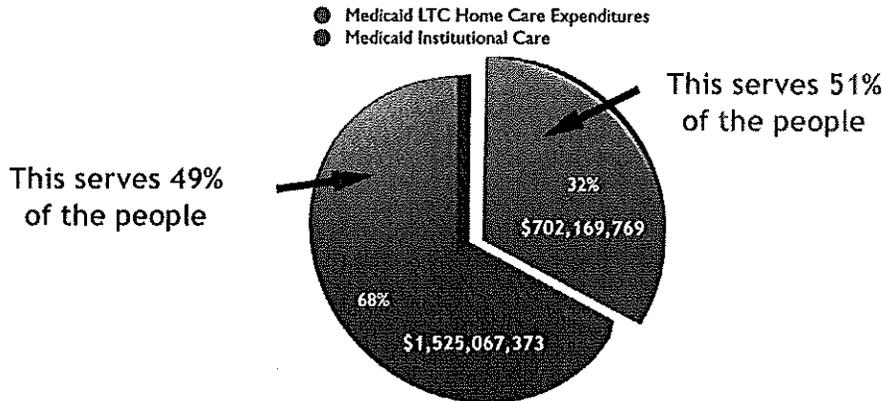
The Commission on Aging commends the Department of Social Services for this waiver renewal. We are most happy to see the addition of assistive technology in the PCA program; this addition will allow for devices that facilitate communication, vision, hearing and more and is a critical component to ensuring independence and dignity for individuals with disabilities.

State Capitol • 210 Capitol Avenue • Hartford, CT 06106  
Phone: 860.240.5200 • Website [www.oga.ct.gov/coa](http://www.oga.ct.gov/coa)  
LTC website: [www.ct.gov/longtermcare](http://www.ct.gov/longtermcare)



The Commission also commends the Department for including additional slots in the PCA waiver application for individuals transitioning out of nursing homes under Money Follows the Person. These slots are essential to ensuring that Connecticut meets its goal under that program.

However, in order to meet broader “rebalancing” goals, we must have additional slots available to *divert* individuals from nursing homes as well. There is currently a wait list for this program; without this type of home- and community-based care, individuals with disabilities risk institutionalization, a much costlier alternative (as illustrated below).



As illustrated by the attached chart, institutionalization is unfortunately an easier option than community living under our current long-term care system structure in Connecticut. As recommended by the Long-Term Care Needs Assessment and other national research and Best Practices, the Commission continues to advise that Connecticut move toward a more streamlined structure that is easier for consumers to access and achieves economies of scale. While we support the goals of the PCA waiver renewal, a unified system would “break down the silos” of our system and move our state forward.

Finally, we renew our call for an easier application system. The Department of Social Services testified this session that it is working with other state agencies on a streamlined application that would help individuals simultaneously apply for multiple programs. Under our current system, individuals apply for each program separately and are burdened with regenerating similar financial and personal documents throughout the year. During this time of enhanced interest in a streamlined government, improving the DSS application process is an ideal example of how we can work to make our state government more efficient, while improving consumer service.

We would be most pleased to work with the Committees and other stakeholders and policymakers on this plan moving forward. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Commission office, at (860) 240-5200. Thank you for your time and for your consideration of this important issue.



