

TESTIMONY
of
Jennifer Hall-Leahy
Before the Aging Committee
of the
Connecticut General Assembly

February 16, 2010

Chairpersons Sen. Edith Prague and Rep. Joe Serra and Honorable Members of the Aging Committee my name is Jennifer Hall-Leahy. I am here today to testify in support of **H.B. 5111, An Act Concerning the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program and ask you to re-open this essential program.**

My mother has been living through the mental and physical torments of Alzheimer's disease for the past five years. Three years ago, in the middle of the night, my mother fell down the stairs, due to her increased state of confusion and fear associated with her condition. Due to this fall, she suffered a severe head injury that has now left her weak on her right side. My father cares for her at home. My father served this country during the Vietnam War and worked his entire life, only to spend his retirement and savings to care for my mother. My father became seriously ill and was admitted to the hospital with a blood infection, from ignoring his own health, due to the constant care that my mother requires. After this, my siblings and I were finally able to get him to apply for the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program only to learn that in April 2009, it was closed to new applicants due to budget constraints.

Our goal is to ensure that mom live comfortably in her community and to continue visiting the Senior Center she loves attending. The grant that would be awarded from the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program would extend my mother's specialized care while she continues to live at home and it would afford my father time to run errands, work part-time and allow him to keep a major financial worry at bay.

In summary, this program would allow my father to cope with the emotional and physical stress of caring for a loved one. Respite care is one way to help delay nursing home care and is far less expensive than the alternative. Nursing home will easily cost \$70,000 a year. Respite care equates to both taxpayer savings and a better quality of life for the Alzheimer's patient. This economic comparison doesn't even touch on health of the caregiver. Being a care-giver is very high stress. Health is certainly impacted, as mentioned above, as is the caregiver's productivity, and ability to earn wages and pay taxes.

Thank you for listening to reasons that I support the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program, and thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions or concerns you may have and please do not hesitate to contact me.

Jennifer Hall-Leahy