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Good evening, Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian and the distinguished members of the Appropriations committee. My name is Heather Sandler and I am a graduate student in Social Work at UCONN, also the former intern at the Alzheimer's Association and a volunteer to the Association.

I would first like to thank you for allowing me an opportunity to comment on Governor Rell's proposed one million dollar cut to the Alzheimer's Respite Care program. Currently the program is funded with $2.3 million as a line item in the Department of Social Services budget.

In Connecticut there are approximately 70,000 constituents who have Alzheimer's disease. The Respite Care program allows many to remain at home and be taken care of by family members or loved ones. Those caregivers provide approximately 98 million hours of unpaid care which translates into over $1 **billion** if they were to be paid. One of the 15 major recommendations of the Long-Term Care Needs Assessment, authorized by the CGA in 2006, is to "Provide Support for informal caregivers". The research clearly indicates that supporting informal caregivers with programs like the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program is critical to keeping individuals out of nursing homes; it keeps caregivers healthy, and allows families to utilize various options in respite allowing for more cost effective respite solutions.

This proposed one million dollar cut to the Respite Care program will be devastating to the people in Connecticut with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias and their caregivers. This program currently saves the state close to $50 million in avoided nursing home costs annually.

This program is vital to families who live with Alzheimer's everyday. In the history of the program there has never been a waiting list for respite grants, there is now a list of over 400 people. The caregivers who received grants in the previous year cannot even apply to receive a new grant because the program is closed and has been since May 11, 2009. Gov. Rell closed the program one week after she signed Public Act 09-75, An Act Concerning the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program, a bill that updated the income and asset eligibility criteria, allowed PCA's (personal care attendants) to provide services under the program, and increase grant size maximums on a case by case basis. It is important to note that the legislature did provide funding for the Alzheimer's Respite Care program in their FY 10-11 budget but the executive branch decided not to proceed with opening this program because of the projected budget deficit.
As our population in Connecticut grows older so do their needs. It is a fact that some people in Connecticut are going to get Alzheimer's disease or some other

type of dementia and we need to support them and their families. This program provides some small relief to those who need it most.

I urge you to maintain the $2.3 million in funding for the Alzheimer's Respite Care program and the reopening of the program to help those in the most need for some much deserved respite help.