

**February 18, 2010**

**Appropriations Committee Public Hearing on Governor's Budget Adjustments**

**Testimony of**

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Sullivan Senior Center  
CT Commission on Aging Member**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the impact of Governor Rell's unfortunate proposal to eliminate the Connecticut Commission on Aging ("the Commission.")

The Commission works independently within the Legislative Branch of Government on world-class research and public-policy initiatives. It is your resource on the increasingly complex issues facing our state and its older population.

It is the voice for tens of thousands of people who receive meals-on-wheels, live in nursing homes and in our communities, struggling to accept the changes and loss experienced every day due to the aging process.

The Commission works for the people—your constituents-- who cannot be here today to testify, but who benefit from its diligence.

As a provider, I depend on the staff for answers to obscure questions and know I will receive a timely and accurate response.

The Commission gathers information by holding Town Hall meetings throughout the state. This is a means to create a dialogue with seniors, their family, friends, neighbors, and service providers, to learn how people are managing.

The Commission is recognized on a national level for its world-class research work on Long- Term Care, and for bringing the Earth's Elders Exhibit, not only to our state Capitol, but also to the Rotunda of the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C. Their intergenerational work is cutting edge, which is substantiated through their partnership with school districts and the CT Department of Education to implement the Earth's Elders curriculum in classrooms, which teaches students about the wisdom of elders and nurtures respect and relationships. This work, like everything the Commission does, is needed and is not duplicated elsewhere in state government.

The Commission budget is modest. In fact, as you well know, its already modest budget was recently reduced by 50%. This is unconscionable. The four-person professional staff has taken salary reductions of up to 40%. The fact they continue to carry on in the highest of professional standards is a testament to their work ethic.

The staff's reputation throughout the aging network is second to none. During my thirty years of service, I have not met or cannot think of a person better suited to serve as Executive Director than Julia Evans Starr. She leads by example, with intelligence and humor, with composure, and in memory of her grandfather who is her inspiration. For those reasons, the Commission staff meets its charge with thoughtful deliberations to impact the decision-makers and work tirelessly to improve the life of older adults.

Connecticut has one of the highest populations of older adults in the country. Now is not the time for elimination. I would, in fact, argue that now is the time to restore the Commission's budget.

Now is the time to seize the opportunity to continue the work of this experienced Commission by rebalancing Medicaid to save the state hundreds of millions of dollars (as recommended by the Commission) and to continue to have an independent and balanced resource to assist you during this tough financial climate. The Commission is a vital and intricate piece of state government. Their work is necessary and will not be provided elsewhere in State government, either in any existing or proposed agency, if it is eliminated.

Again, thank you for this opportunity.