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Testimony to the General Assembly's Appropriations Committee Concerning the Connecticut Commission on Aging
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I am reaching out to you today, as a long-time caregiver for my parents (now-deceased) and advocate for seniors and their families. It is my personal appeal that you reject Governor Rell's short-sighted proposal to once again eliminate the Connecticut Commission on Aging.

Eliminating the Commission would be a terribly fiscally irresponsible reaction to the state's financial difficulties that would cause serious harm to our rapidly growing aging population and their families. The Commission also serves an extremely important **oversight role**, providing for accountability within all levels of state government. In recent months, as you have been informed, it identified $11 million in untapped federal funds that are now flowing into Connecticut. This accomplishment alone—just one of many—returns millions of dollars more to the state than the Commission's tiny budget costs taxpayers.

Through its research work, the Commission has made concrete and actionable recommendations to the General Assembly that would save Connecticut $600 million in Medicaid long-term care costs alone. Clearly, this is an agency that knows the meaning of "return-on-investment."

My introduction to the Commission began some six years ago when my parents decided to remain in the West Hartford home where I grew up. As a son trying to do the right thing, I made it my business to learn about *retiring at home* and the local resources, which included connecting with the now-eliminated **Senior Job Bank of West Hartford** and the Commission on Aging. My journey had begun as caregiver and advocate.

In my quest to make our "homestead" safe, secure and senior-friendly, modifications and enhancements were made to the house, making it more supportive for ***aging in place***. I soon wrote a book about my experiences, **MAKING YOUR HOME SENIOR-FRIENDLY** and began speaking about the virtues of ***aging in place***. With the support and encouragement of the Commission, I became a **Certified Aging in Place Specialist** and began writing for national publications and websites.

During the past six years, I learned many things about ***aging in place*** and ***aging with dignity***. I learned my own limitations and the need to recruit, hire and manage professional homecare workers to support my parents, since I did not live with them. I soon found there were many practices and policies that did not support aging in place. The Commission introduced me to several influential legislators with whom I met and have developed a productive relationship.

Speaking from my own experience, The Commission on Aging has always been a consistent and helpful source of information, policies and resources and to eliminate it would not be supportive for our aging population and their families.

So after several years of support from the Commission and others, I am now a member of two committees at the United Nations and I am working with state legislators to improve the ***quality of life*** for our seniors as they strive to "age in place" with grace and dignity.

In closing, this is no time to make unwise, penny-wise, pound-foolish decisions at the state Capitol. I urge the legislature to support the Commission on Aging and reject the governor's proposal to eliminate it.

Thank you for this opportunity to be heard.

The true test of one's character is not how long the journey is, but rather how the potholes and detours were navigated along the way!