

Margaret Smith-Hale
Executive Director

February 22, 2010

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Testimony to the Human Services Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly.

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This testimony is in support of Senate Bill # 66, an act concerning expansion of the livery license exemption to include community-based regional transportation services for the visually impaired.

ITN*NorthCentralConnecticut*TM is a community-based and community supported program that offers rides 24/7 to seniors and adults with visually impairments in the towns of Bloomfield, East Granby, East Windsor, Enfield, Granby, Somers, South Windsor, Suffield, Windsor and Windsor Locks. This is an alternative transportation program that uses principally volunteer drivers who provide rides in private vehicles. There is no restriction on the purpose of a ride, and help is offered to carry packages, fold walkers, and open doors. Riding with ITN is like riding with a friend.

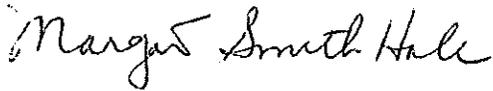
Our service is "door-through-door". Volunteers go to a person's home and help them to the car. At the point of destination we go into the building and make sure that the rider is safe and where they intended to go. If the purpose of the ride is shopping we will stay with them and read labels as necessary.

46% of the rides that we give are for Medical purposes. In addition, 20% are for consumer purposes, 10% for employment and volunteering, 8% for recreation, 5% for Church, 6% for Social including visits to nursing homes and hospitals, 2% for education, 1% for inter-modal, and 2% for other personal business.

Our programs give back the independence that people had when they drove themselves. In addition, it helps to maintain a healthy lifestyle and avoids isolation. 2009 was our first year of giving rides. We finished the year with 1,754 rides. We are now giving 230 per month and growing.

This exemption is needed to allow us to maintain our base of volunteer drivers and grow our programs. We urge you to support this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Margaret Smith Hale".

Margaret Smith Hale
Executive Director