



Companions & Homemakers™

We know what you're going through.

FEBRUARY 16, 2010

TESTIMONY OF J. MARTIN ACEVEDO, GENERAL COUNSEL OF COMPANIONS & HOMEMAKERS, INC. BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON AGING IN SUPPORT OF:

HB 5110. AN ACT CONCERNING CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS FOR EMPLOYEES OF HOMEMAKER-COMPANION AGENCIES AND HOME HEALTH AGENCIES

HB 5112. AN ACT REDUCING THE INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTION UNDER THE STATE-FUNDED HOME-CARE PROGRAM FOR THE ELDERLY

Companions & Homemakers, Inc. (C&H) is a homemaker-companion agency registered with the Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection. The company was founded in 1990 and presently has 10 offices located throughout the State of Connecticut. C&H cares for over 3000 older adults and employs approximately 1600 caregivers. Our clientele consists of private-pay clients as well as clients of the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders. We are pleased to testify in support of House Bills 5110 and 5112. We believe these two bills ought to pass.

HB 5110 (Background checks)

First, HB 5110 must pass because it provides much needed clarification of the term "comprehensive background check" contained in the original statute passed in 2006.

Second, HB 5110 requires those seeking a certificate of registration as a homemaker-companion agency to undergo a state and national criminal background history check. Presently, no such requirement exists. Therefore, anyone with a criminal background, including crimes of moral turpitude or crimes against seniors, can set up and operate a homemaker-companion agency. Clearly, this is unacceptable.

Third, HB 5110 mandates comprehensive background checks for employees of homemaker-home health agencies and home health care agencies. We welcome this change as we cannot discern any justifiable reason not to hold workers employed by home health agencies to the same standards of fitness governing non-medical agencies. Regardless of the medical versus non-medical nomenclature, consumers of all these critical services are entitled to expect that each and every worker who enters their home has undergone a background check in accordance with law.

HB 5112 (Cost-sharing reduction)

C&H also supports House Bill 5112, which seeks to reduce the rate of contribution towards the cost of home care services from 15 per cent down to 5 per cent. For many seniors, many of them well under the poverty level, and most of them saddled with expensive monthly pharmacy co-pays that consume any residual income, a cost-sharing of this magnitude is impossible. We already have begun to see many of our program clients cancel services as a result of this forced cost-sharing. Unable to receive these critical services, these seniors are at risk of costly institutionalization. We believe that reducing the cost-sharing fee down to 5% is necessary to enable more seniors to remain in the program.

I will be happy to entertain any questions. Tel: 860-677-4948 Fax: 860-409-2530 613 New Britain Avenue, Farmington, CT 06032

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