

canpfa

The Connecticut Association of Not-for-profit Providers For the Aging

Testimony to the Appropriations Committee Regarding the Governor's Proposed Budget Adjustments

Presented by Mag Morelli, President
February 11, 2010

CANPFA members serve thousands of people every day through mission-driven, not-for-profit organizations dedicated to providing the services people need, when they need them, in the place they call home. Our members offer the continuum of aging services: assisted living residences, continuing care retirement communities, residential care homes, nursing homes, home and community based services, and senior housing.

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Mag Morelli and I am the president of the Connecticut Association of Not-for-profit Providers for the Aging (CANPFA), an organization of over 150 non-profit and mission-driven providers of aging services representing the full continuum of long term care. CANPFA Chair Stephen McPherson has provided previous testimony regarding skilled nursing facility reimbursement and I would like to add the following comments regarding various elements of the home and community based service spectrum of the long term care continuum. I would also like to mention that the Connecticut Association of Adult Day Centers has submitted testimony on several of these issues. The day centers are very concerned as they are witnessing their clients being negatively affected by the funding restrictions on both the home care program and the Alzheimer's' respite program.

15% Co-pay on the State Funded Portion of the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders

The state has adopted and embraced a long term care plan with a goal of rebalancing the system and providing choice for individuals seeking long term care. The Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders should be the flag ship program for this plan, but unfortunately the state funded portion of this program has been hurt by the implementation of a 15% co-payment. These co-pays are affecting access to care as the elderly who need services may be unable to afford the co-pay expense and are choosing not to take advantage of the necessary services. We know that receiving the right services at the right time in the most appropriate setting is the right thing to do and is the most cost effective thing to do. **Therefore we urge the legislature to review the effect of the newly instituted co-pay on consumer choice and to consider modifying or eliminating it.**

Continuation of Closed Enrollment in the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program

Family caregivers have an important role to play in the long-term care system, but the challenges facing them are great. Connecticut's unpaid caregivers provided over \$1 billion worth of care to relatives and in return, they are called upon to sacrifice lost wages and to face significant physical and mental health risks. The risks of poor health and premature death are greatest among those who care for relatives with Alzheimer's disease. In order to continue reaping the benefits that family caregivers provide to older adults, we as a society must increase our support for them. A crucial aspect of that support is funding for respite care.

We urge the committee to reopen the respite program.

Elimination of all Legislative Commissions

As a member of the Long Term Care Advisory Committee, CANPFA has witnessed the leadership that has been displayed by the Commission and its executive director. A unifying force, the Commission on Aging has brought together a diverse spectrum of advocates to work toward the common goal of achieving a seamless system of long term care. This is extremely important as we move beyond the traditional approach of viewing programs and services as individual silos and begin to look at long term care as a complete continuum of services. The Commission has moved us forward in this direction and we believe that the elderly citizens of this state have benefited from it. From the recent comprehensive long term care needs assessment to the State's consumer friendly long term care web site, the Commission has been a leader.

We encourage the Committee to support the Commission on Aging and to look to it as a resource to the Legislature and a benefit to older citizens of this state.

Elimination of Training Programs for Licensed Practical Nurses

An adequate future workforce is an issue and a concern for all of health care providers and particularly for aging service providers. Licensed practical nurses play an important role in the long term care workforce and as the population ages; the need for long term care health care workers will increase dramatically.

We believe that investing in the training of health care workforce is not only extremely important to the long term care system, but a good investment for the state.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Mag Morelli, President of CANPFA, mmorelli@canpfa.org, (860) 828-2903