

Testimony for the Appropriations Committee 2/18/10
Public Hearing on HB 5018 - An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures and
Revenues for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2011

By: William Eddy,
Vice-Chair, Connecticut Commission on Aging

Good afternoon distinguished Chairs and Members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Bill Eddy. I am Vice-Chair and an appointed volunteer board member of the Connecticut Commission on Aging (Commission.)

Results-Based Accountability Objectives and Statutory Charge

Overall, the Commission works to enhance the quality of life for older adults of today and tomorrow in the State of Connecticut. Its statutory charge includes oversight and comment on those areas of the Department of Social Services (DSS) budget dedicated to aging.

Deep Understanding of State Long-Term Care System; Research completed.

Significant energy is dedicated to understanding the complex long-term care system within Connecticut and over \$2 billion in expenditures for state programs and services conducted by DSS. In this regard, the Commission has overseen for the legislature high caliber professional research titled "Connecticut Long -Term Care Needs Assessment" conducted by the UConn Center on Aging between 2006-2008. It deals with needs, efficiencies, redundancies and streamlining recommendations for state residents, for DSS and for rebalancing the state's long- term care delivery system of services and supports with the potential of saving hundreds of millions in annual state long term care expenditures.

Focus upon supporting the creation of a more efficient cost-effective system.

During this challenging period in Connecticut's economic history, the Commission on Aging has further modified its priorities to provide for a more intense focus upon thoughtful streamlining and revenue enhancement efficiencies both within and outside DSS.

In depth experience and extensive relationships and partnerships

The Commission has a small but experienced professional staff of 4 and an unpaid volunteer board of 21. All of the volunteer board members have some connection with older adult issues and many with the structure through which services are delivered. Through the Commission's management and chairing of the Connecticut Long-Term Care Advisory Council, Connecticut Elder Action Network and other involvements, important relationships have been established with providers, consumers, and advocates in addition to the aging- related activities within DSS.

Commission on Aging is Unique

The Commission on Aging has intimate working knowledge of the structure and the way things work, both within and outside of state government relating to older adult issues that external advocates do not have. The Commission is also unique in that it focuses on major systemic changes, the big picture, and is nimble and knows how to get things done.

Commission on Aging is Proactive

In its "oversight" role, the Commission recently identified up to \$11 million in new federal funds that are now flowing into the state. The Commission pointed out an oversight in a state protocol established by DSS and with great effort effected the change. This one action alone will bring in additional federal funds expected to total more than 40 times The Commission's revised annual budget of \$256,071.

Keeping the Legislature Informed, Including Flawed Legislation

The Commission's effectiveness, its many accomplishments (see attachments) and the thoughtful manner in which it undertakes its many tasks can be attested through its presentations for the Results- Based Accountability (RBA) initiative. It is also evident in the support the Commission has provided and continues to provide to the Commission on Enhancing Agency Outcomes and the Program Review and Investigations Committee, and most recently at the February 5, 2010 Joint Legislative Briefing on long-term care issues which the Commission organized and where it effected meaningful presentations to the Appropriations, Public Health, Human Services, and Aging Committees.

In that briefing alone the Commission, and members of the Long-Term Care Advisory Council--which the Commission chairs and manages--identified two matters legislated at the last session, relating to co-pay increases under the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders and reductions in respite care reimbursement that have substantial negative repercussions and which will end up costing the state more money and creating miserable circumstances for many. It is our understanding that many of the legislators attending that briefing deeply appreciated the actionable information that was provided and intend to create corrective legislation

Hands on Strategic Implementation.

Julia Evans Starr, the Commission's Executive Director, and her professional, creative and motivated staff, not only possess deep knowledge, expert research and practical analysis, sound policy promotion, and communication capabilities relative to older adult issues, they also participate in the hands- on strategic implementation of cost- effective projects in which they have been intimately involved. The state's Money Follows the Person initiative is a good example where the independent Commission is represented on the DSS MFP Steering Committee and also Chairs one of the Subcommittees on Workforce Development.

The Commission on Aging Represents a Sound Investment

The Commission on Aging represents a sound investment that has already been realized in terms of the research completed, development of its small staff, and creation of an extensive and knowledgeable network of partners and other relationships that are part of the fabric making up the very complicated and expensive public and private long term care delivery system.

The Commission's \$256,071 budget for 2011 reflects a 53 % reduction from the 2009 budget. The four staff members have taken salary cuts of up to 40%. This budget represents a ridiculously small fraction of the over \$2- billion budget within DSS devoted to older adults and long- term care services and supports which the Commission critiques, among its many other activities.

We believe the Commission is doing its job and the State is getting a great return on its investment in terms of what is already in place, additional federal funding representing many, many times the present annual budget of the Commission, and the real prospect for future efficiencies.

More than a Research and Simple Advocacy Role

As an independent agency of the state under Legislative Management, the Commission on Aging plays more than a research and simple advocacy role. As the Appropriations Committee, the Commission on Enhancing Agency Outcomes and other state policy makers strive to make government more efficient and to control escalating costs in order to bring the budget into balance on a credible and sustainable basis, remember the Commission already is helping and will continue to help. Its hands on expertise and intimate knowledge of the internal DSS structure and deep and extensive working relationships developed over years throughout the long-term care system will continue to work for Connecticut.

The Commission on Aging Deserves to be Retained

The small, low- cost, highly efficient, knowledgeable and creative Commission on Aging is a strategic investment for the State of Connecticut that deserves to be retained and involved. We pledge that we will not compromise values or draw back from challenge. We will continue to lead and be unafraid.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to present these thoughts to you.

The Connecticut Commission on Aging Maximizes Federal Funds And is a Strategic Investment for the State

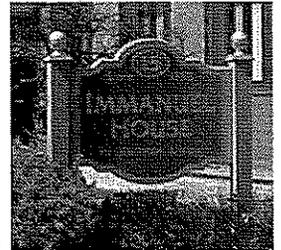


Recently, the CoA was successful in championing policy changes that help people age in their homes and communities. These changes give people a choice in how and where they live and receive services ~and at the same time bring into the state tens of millions of new federal dollars!

With a nominal budget of \$234,000, CoA is clearly a wise investment for Connecticut.

The following highlights two of the CoA's recent successes:

1. **Housing Opportunities for Low-Income Older Adults:** The availability of appropriate, affordable housing is a significant barrier for individuals hoping to "age in place" or return to the community through efforts such as Money Follows the Person.



The federal Assisted Living Conversion Program provides money to low-income congregate housing facilities (section 202 housing) to convert into assisted living facilities. This federal money is used to build communal laundry facilities, dining areas and make other upgrades that allow residents to receive assisted living services on-site.

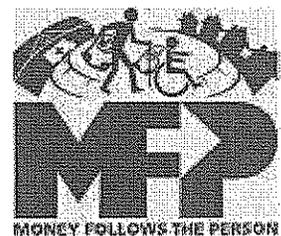
To date, 271 individuals have received these services in the past six years, at a state cost of approximately \$27,000 annually per person (versus \$62,000 annually for nursing home care).

However, existing state law (CGS §8-206e) restricted Connecticut to having only four of these projects, limiting the state's ability to receive federal funds. The Commission on Aging identified this obstacle and successfully worked with policymakers to lift this restriction (PA 09-5).

Connecticut has received over \$65 million in federal funds for this program to date.

Without this change in state law, our state would have been ineligible for any additional federal funds for this worthy program.

2. **Money Follows the Person:** In late May, the Commission on Aging detected a trend with individuals being transitioned out of nursing homes and back into the community under the Money Follows the Person program. Because of a quirk in Connecticut's "operating protocol," our state was receiving extra federal funds on approximately half of the transitions, leaving additional federal money in Washington. After identifying this trend, the CoA educated policymakers and, as a result, the administration submitted the change to the federal government, which approved it. **This oversight activity of the CoA has the potential to bring up to \$11 million in new federal money into Connecticut.**



The Commission on Aging is established under CGS §17b-420. Our mission is to serve as an objective, credible source of information on issues affecting Connecticut's older adults, to prepare our state for the needs of its soaring older adult population and to provide accountability within state government.

For more information, please contact the Connecticut Commission on Aging, at 860-240-5200.

