

alzheimer's association®

the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer

Chairpersons Senator Toni Harp and Rep. John Geragosian and Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee my name is Laurie Julian, Public Policy Director of the Alzheimer's Association, Connecticut Chapter. I am here today to testify about the **Alzheimer's Respite Care Program and the impact of the closure by Governor Rell's Executive Order on May 11, 2009.**

Although the program is not listed in the March 1, 2010 Deficit Mitigation Plan, the closure to new intakes since May 1, 2009 has had devastating consequences to over 400 patients and their caregivers who await essential services. Despite the appropriated funding by this committee for Fiscal Year 2010 in the amount of \$2.3 million, the program's closure has resulted in the inability of patients to access the program and lapse of unused funds. Many patients have prematurely transitioned to nursing home care. There were over 900 families served by this program last year, a 24% increase. The program has achieved results in relieving stress on caregivers.

Currently in Connecticut there are over 70,000 residents who have Alzheimer's and related dementias with over 125,758 caregivers. Those caregivers, usually family, provide over 143,213,278 million hours of unpaid care that would equal over a billion dollars. The Respite program allows many of these families the time they need to keep their loved one home.

The Connecticut Long-Term Care Needs Assessment, commissioned by the legislature,¹ reports that informal caregivers are family and friends who provide care without pay, and are the primary source of long-term care. Seventy percent of people with Alzheimer's disease live at home, cared for by family and friends. The importance of unpaid care provided by family and friends cannot be overemphasized, as it constitutes the back bone of the long-term care system.

Unfortunately, this comes at a price in terms of compromising the caregivers' health. Due to the specialized care required of Alzheimer and dementia patients, we hear from caregivers who endure overwhelming stress and are at their breaking points. For many, the grants awarded through the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program has extended the patients' care allowing them to continue to live at home while it affords the caregiver much needed relief, permitting the caregiver to maintain employment outside the home.

The Long Term Care Needs Assessment predicts there will be a demand for over 9,000 jobs in the health care industry over the next five years to serve the growing/aging population. The average cost of health and long-term care for people with Alzheimer's is 3 times the average cost incurred by individuals 65 and older without this condition, due to the specialized care required of Alzheimer's patients. Alzheimer's disease is predicted to expand rapidly in the coming years.

The Alzheimer's Respite Care Program with its support services employs companions and homemakers, home aides, adult day care centers, personal care assistants and case managers, preserving and creating thousands of sorely needed jobs in the health care industry. Given that the long-term care industry employs more people than nearly any other industry, and direct-care jobs are the employment core of this industry and are among the nation's fastest-growing occupations, the Respite Program is a small

¹ Connecticut Long-Term Care Needs Assessment (P.A. 06-188) is the first comprehensive statewide study to help guide crucial planning and was funded by the Connecticut General Assembly.

investment, which protects the care of the Alzheimer's patient and caregiver while preserving and creating jobs in Connecticut.

In closing, Respite care is one way to help delay nursing home care and is far less expensive than the alternative. Nursing home will easily cost \$70,000 a year. Respite care equates to both taxpayer savings and a better quality of life for the Alzheimer's patient. In sum, the program is a small investment and saves the state millions of dollars.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact me if you have questions or concerns. (860) 828-2828 or laurie.julian@alz.org

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