



"Enhancing the quality of life for older adults in North Central Connecticut by ensuring that they have access to quality and cost-effective services."

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Testimony delivered March 4, 2010 in support of Bill 5372-An Act Concerning Accessible Housing

Good afternoon, my name is Maureen McIntyre and I am the Assistant Director of the North Central Area Agency on Aging here in Hartford.

The mission of the North Central Area Agency on Aging is to enhance the quality of life for older adults and their caregivers in the Greater Hartford Region by ensuring that they have access to quality and cost-effective services. As aging is a journey and not a destination, we are therefore committed to a vision of community inclusion available to all of Connecticut's citizens regardless of age or disability.

If enacted, Bill 5372 would ameliorate for future Connecticut citizens an issue of sizable cost and concern for today's elders: how to remain in their own homes as safely as possible.

I have seen first-hand the difficulty of attempting to renovate existing dwellings to accommodate the human condition of aging.

- ✓ Doorways and hallways not wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair that wasn't needed a year ago.
- ✓ Full bathrooms upstairs and the half-bath downstairs; inaccessible to homeowners with mobility issues
- ✓ Elaborate front steps that are quite appealing from the curb but dangerous if not impossible for residents, friends, and neighbors, with walkers, canes and wheelchairs.

At my agency we hear from folks unable to remain in their homes because the costs of these renovations are prohibitive. Many of these individuals will move, if they can afford it. Many will put their belongings in storage. Many will sell personal affects that will not fit into their new “downsized” lifestyle. Still others will go to nursing homes. The efficacy of *home and community based services* is dependent upon our ability to keep consumers in their homes, and in the community.

The beauty of Bill 5372 is that it provides hope for a better future. It acknowledges that that we all deserve to age in place with grace and dignity. It acknowledges that homes are more than the four walls that protect us from the elements. It provides a logical framework for re-envisioning community. And therein lies perhaps the most important concept: though this bill has been championed tirelessly by Independence Unlimited, one of the five Centers for Independent Living in Connecticut, and despite the fact that many organizations from the aging community are here today to provide support as well, in truth, this bill is for all of us.

And so I thank Representative Ken Green for his vision and for having the courage to challenge the existing paradigm. In the land of steady habits, we need to recognize and to seize upon those opportunities that will contribute to the greater good. Bill 5372 does exactly that.

I thank you so very much for your time.

Most sincerely,

Maureen C. McIntyre

Assistant Director

North Central Area Agency on Aging