

March 1, 2011

Appropriations Committee Public Hearing on Governor's Budget Proposal

Testimony of

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Director, Services for the Elderly
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CT Commission on Aging Volunteer Board Member**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the impact of Governor Malloy's budget proposal on the Connecticut Commission on Aging.

In short, I strongly oppose any reduction in funding for the Commission which has already undergone deep cuts in its already modest budget.

Even so, as you are well aware, this small Commission—staffed by only four professionals-- has met and exceeded its mandate under Results-Based Accountability.

The Commission works independently within the Legislative Branch of Government on world-class research and public-policy initiatives. It is your resource on the increasingly complex issues facing our state and its older population.

It is the voice for tens of thousands of people who receive meals-on-wheels, live in nursing homes and in our communities, struggling to accept the changes and loss experienced every day due to the aging process.

The Commission works for the people—your constituents-- who cannot be here today to testify, but who benefit from its diligence.

As a provider, I depend on the staff for answers to obscure, often complex questions and know I will receive a timely and accurate response.

The Commission is recognized on a national level for its world-class research work on numerous issues, including, but by no means limited to, Long- Term Care. This work, like everything the Commission does, is essential and is not duplicated elsewhere in state government or in the private sector.

The Commission budget is modest. In fact, as you well know, its already modest budget was reduced by more than 50%. This is unconscionable. The four-person professional staff has taken very significant salary reductions—leaders in the call for “shared sacrifice.” The fact they continue to carry on in the highest of professional standards is a testament to their work ethic.

The staff's reputation throughout the aging network is second to none. During my thirty years of service, I have not met and cannot think of a person better suited to serve as Executive Director than Julia Evans Starr. She leads by example, with intelligence and humor, with composure, and in memory of her grandfather who is her inspiration. For those reasons, the Commission staff meets its charge with thoughtful deliberations to impact the decision-makers and work tirelessly to improve the life of older adults.

Connecticut has one of the highest populations of older adults in the country—it is in fact the nation's seventh oldest state. It deserves our state's full support.

Now is the time to seize the opportunity to continue the work of this experienced Commission by following its action plan to rebalance Medicaid to save the state hundreds of millions of dollars annually and to continue to have an independent, objective, non-partisan and balanced resource to assist you during this tough financial climate. The Commission is a vital and intricate piece of state government. Its work is necessary and not duplicated elsewhere in State government, either in any existing or proposed agency.

Again, thank you for this opportunity.

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