

Testimony for the Appropriations Committee Public Hearing March 1, 2011

By: William L. Eddy
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Good evening distinguished Chairs and Members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Bill Eddy. I am the Treasurer and an appointed volunteer board member of the Connecticut Commission on Aging (Commission.)

Results-Based Accountability Objectives and Statutory Charge

The Commission is an independent, non-partisan research and public policy agency of the General Assembly. Its highly regarded and increasingly influential work informs legislators, the Executive Branch and multiple other audiences on issues that have a profound effect on the state budget and on the quality of life for older adults of today and tomorrow. Its statutory charge also includes oversight and comment on those areas of the Department of Social Services (DSS) budget dedicated to aging. The Commission occupies a truly unique place within state government. It is committed to the principles of results-based accountability, and its work is duplicated nowhere else, either within government or the private sector.

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 world-class research titled the "Connecticut Long -Term Care Needs Assessment," conducted in partnership with the UConn Center on Aging between 2006-2008. The Commission has presented—to the General Assembly and to the Governor—concrete, actionable recommendations stemming from this research that can save our state hundreds of millions in annual state long term care Medicaid expenditures. In this work alone—by turning proactive research into action—the Commission has served as a role model for results-based accountability.

Focus on creating a more efficient cost-effective system.

During this historically challenging period in Connecticut's economic history, the Commission on Aging aligns its priorities with an intense focus on revenue enhancement and achievable efficiencies both within and outside DSS.

Deep experience and extensive relationships and partnerships.

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

Commission on Aging is Unique

The Commission 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 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 around \$250,000.

Informing the General Assembly

The Commission's effectiveness and the thoughtful, objective and professional manner in which it undertakes its many tasks is evidenced through its presentations for the Results- Based Accountability (RBA) initiative. It is also evident in the support the Commission provides to the Commission on Enhancing Agency Outcomes and the Program Review and Investigations Committee. The cost-saving recommendations recently advanced by the CEO, for example, contain the Commission on Aging's recommendations for rebalancing the long-term care system—which, again, can save Connecticut millions of dollars in Medicaid expenditures.

Hands on Strategic Implementation.

Julia Evans Starr, the Commission's Executive Director, and her three professional, creative and motivated staff, possess deep knowledge, including expert research and practical analysis skills. They practice sound policy promotion, demonstrate strong communication capabilities relative to older adult issues and participate in 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 of its leadership. The independent Commission is represented on the DSS MFP Steering Committee—Ms. Evans Starr is the co-chair—and also chairs a Subcommittee 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 the period 2010- 2011 reflected a 55% reduction from the 2009 budget. Over the two-year period, the four staff members already have taken salary cuts ranging from 25% to 50%. This budget represents a small fraction of the over \$2 billion budget within DSS devoted to older adults and long-term care services and supports. As I stated earlier, the Commission has presented concrete recommendations on how the complex system that supports these services can be rebalanced to provide significant cost savings while providing choice for thousands of older adults and persons with disabilities.

We believe the Commission is doing its job—and more—and the State is getting a substantial 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.

The Commission on Aging Deserves to be Adequately Funded

The small, low- cost, highly efficient, knowledgeable and creative Commission on Aging is a strategic investment that has already been made for the State of Connecticut. It deserves to be adequately funded and supported. We pledge that we will not compromise values or draw back from challenge. We will continue to lead.

We ask at the very least—that the Commission's present budget not be further eroded.

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

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