

Testimony before Human Services Committee  
March 1, 2011  
Bill #HB 6486

Good day. I am Bette Marafino, Vice-President of the CT Alliance for Retired Americans. The Board of the Alliance endorses the Quality Workforce Council.

A priority of the Alliance for Retired Americans is to foster quality care for seniors in CT. This April we are holding a forum called, "Aging with Dignity, A Continuum of Care". We know that nursing home care is very expensive for both the state and individuals and that any time we can provide alternative care is a benefit to the state and to the elderly.

Over the past few years I have sat through various legislative hearings on the care of the elderly. I often hear concerns that seniors are confused about who to contact for assistance in receiving home and community based services. Just last week at a hearing before the Committee on Aging, I heard seniors give testimony about the impersonal treatment they received at an agency and their subsequent loss of dignity. One state representative remarked that we need "a better coordinated system."

Dignity is very important to seniors and that is why many choose to direct their own care by hiring their own home care provider.

Although home care providers are paid with public dollars and provide the critical services that clients need to stay independent, they receive low wages and few receive health care coverage or other benefits. Therefore creating labor shortages and causing constant disruption in the continuity of care.

On a personal note, my parents, in their declining years, were confused about which services were available for their home care assistance and they often experienced a change in home care workers. They were told that it was difficult to hire trained, qualified workers who would stay because many of these workers took a job elsewhere which would pay them more money.

Massachusetts and Oregon have well-established Home Care Commissions that are responsible for ensuring the quality of home care for seniors and people with disabilities. I have been especially impressed with the Oregon model which is comprehensive in its scope and takes measures to ensure that home care workers are well-trained and qualified and that seniors have options that are clearly delineated and communicated to them.

Please vote in support of HB 6486. It is way past time for the legislature to form a Workforce Council that will provide a comprehensive approach to home care along with providing qualified, well- paid home care providers. Thank you for your attention to this matter.