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Testimony in support of Committee Bill No. 297, An Act Concerning An Amendment to the Medicaid State Plan Under Section 1915(i) of the Social Security Act to Provide Home Care Services.

Human Services Committee Public Hearing, March 8, 2011

Senator Musto, Representative Tercyak and Distinguished Members of the Human Services Committee,

My name is Anita Towhill, RN and I am from Columbia, CT. I urge you to support Committee Bill No. 297, An Act Concerning An Amendment to the Medicaid State Plan Under Section 1915 (i) of the Social Security Act to Provide Home Care Services.

I am here today to share my professional and personal experiences as a nurse who has worked in long-term care, as a family member whose loved one has resided in a nursing home and as a person living with multiple sclerosis.

I worked at a Manchester area nursing home for 9 years as a floor nurse/charge nurse and night supervisor. The facility had 125 beds and the youngest resident was 54 years of age.

The younger individuals were extremely isolated and had almost no support system. Some of the women living with multiple sclerosis, their spouses had divorced them and their children became busy with their own lives. A few residents, who are my peers, stand out in my mind because they came to live in the nursing home since there were no options to support their independence and help them to remain at home. The existence and availability of services that included care coordination, home-health care or personal care assistance, nursing, meals-on-wheels, medication administration, rehabilitation services, would have prevented their pre-mature placement in a nursing home.

Please see reverse side...

The longer that these residents are living in the nursing home, they less likely they are able to self-direct their own care. I am still in touch with these residents and although Money Follows the Person exists, there is no way that these particular people could survive on the Medicaid Personal Care Assistance Waiver. The individuals are under age 65, have multiple sclerosis and would benefit from the variety of services that are available under other waivers; but for now, they will remain in a nursing home.

Connecticut has created many silos of programs that serve specific people based on their age or diagnosis, not necessarily by functional need and financial need. The Medicaid 1915 (i) State Plan Amendment creates an opportunity to help individuals remain independent.

I volunteer for my church by serving on their finance committee; I was an accountant before becoming a nurse. My other passion is volunteering as an MS Activist for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Connecticut Chapter. I am finding that it is much more difficult to manage my mobility as my MS changes, but I will continue to be active in these positions.

All of us, no matter what our circumstances need options that can offer hope and independence. Please approve the legislation that directs DSS to apply for a Medicaid 1915(i) State Plan Amendment for home care. We must preserve independence and maintain hope so that individuals can remain active in their communities.

Thank you.

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