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IN SUPPORT OF:

**H.B. 5215, AN ACT INCREASING THE PERSONAL NEEDS ALLOWANCE
S.B. 142, AN ACT INCREASING ELIGIBILITY FOR THE CHCPE**

**COMMITTEE ON AGING
FEBRUARY 29, 2012**

I am the Director of Elder Law for Connecticut Legal Services, a non-profit legal aid agency. My testimony is submitted on behalf of CT's low income elderly clients.

Last year, the State of Connecticut reduced the personal needs allowance for nursing home residents who are eligible for Medicaid from \$69 to \$60 per month. The State of Connecticut also eliminated the annual increase based on the cost of living index. The personal needs allowance is the small amount of money that nursing home residents are allowed to keep from their monthly income to cover non-Medicaid related expenses. The bulk of the nursing home resident's income is used to cover the costs of their nursing home care, or to cover other expenses permitted by the state Department of Social Services.

With this \$60.00 a month, a nursing home resident is responsible for paying for his or her clothes, mail postage, internet, computers, hair cuts, and a phone. I believe last year that taking away \$9.00 a month from the little nursing home residents were allowed to keep was overly harsh without saving the State of Connecticut any significant dollars. Therefore, I support HB 5215, which would increase the personal needs allowance to \$65 per month.

The State of Connecticut also has made recent strides in supporting the elderly and individuals with disabilities, who would prefer to live in the community and receive home care services, rather than live in an institution. Not only is it good public policy, it is cost effective. Therefore, we support S.B. 142, which would raise the asset test for the state funded CT Home Care Program for Elders from one hundred fifty per cent of the community spouse protected amount to \$50,000 for an individual and \$75,000 for a married couple. This will increase the number of seniors who are eligible for the state funded home care program and reduce the number of seniors who might need nursing home care.

