



**Testimony of AARP on
S.B. 176, AAC Air Conditioning in Nursing Homes
February 28, 2012**

AARP is a nonprofit, non-partisan organization with nearly 600,000 Connecticut members. AARP helps people 50+ have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. AARP commends the Aging Committee for reintroducing legislation to require nursing facilities to install air conditioning in residents' rooms.

We support the requirement outlined in Section 1 of S.B. 176. It is important that air conditioning be installed in the individual rooms—not just in the dining area or common space—because residents spend a significant amount of time in their rooms. Air conditioned rooms would give residents the ability to maintain a comfortable temperature even during the hot, humid summer months.

Air conditioning in nursing homes is not just a comfort issue; it is a serious health issue. Nursing home residents are especially vulnerable to heat-related illness given their underlying health conditions. Many residents are on medications that compromise the body's natural ability to adjust to extreme heat. Diuretics, for example, which can be prescribed for high blood pressure, prevent the storage of fluids and restrict blood vessels at the skin's surface. Additionally, tranquilizers and medication used to treat residents with Parkinson's disease can disrupt the body's ability to perspire. Less perspiration, in turn, limits the body's ability to cool itself down. Also, chronic conditions including heart disease can restrict the body's natural defenses to extreme heat.

These underlying conditions and circumstances put nursing home residents at elevated risk of heat related illness. Even moderate changes in temperature can aggravate existing health conditions and further complicate the health status of frail nursing home residents. Therefore, the lack of air conditioning can result in otherwise unnecessary and costly hospitalizations with increased Medicaid costs. AARP believes the air conditioning requirement outlined in S.B. 176, section 1 is good public policy. It will ensure quality, comfort and safety for nursing home residents in Connecticut. Thank you.